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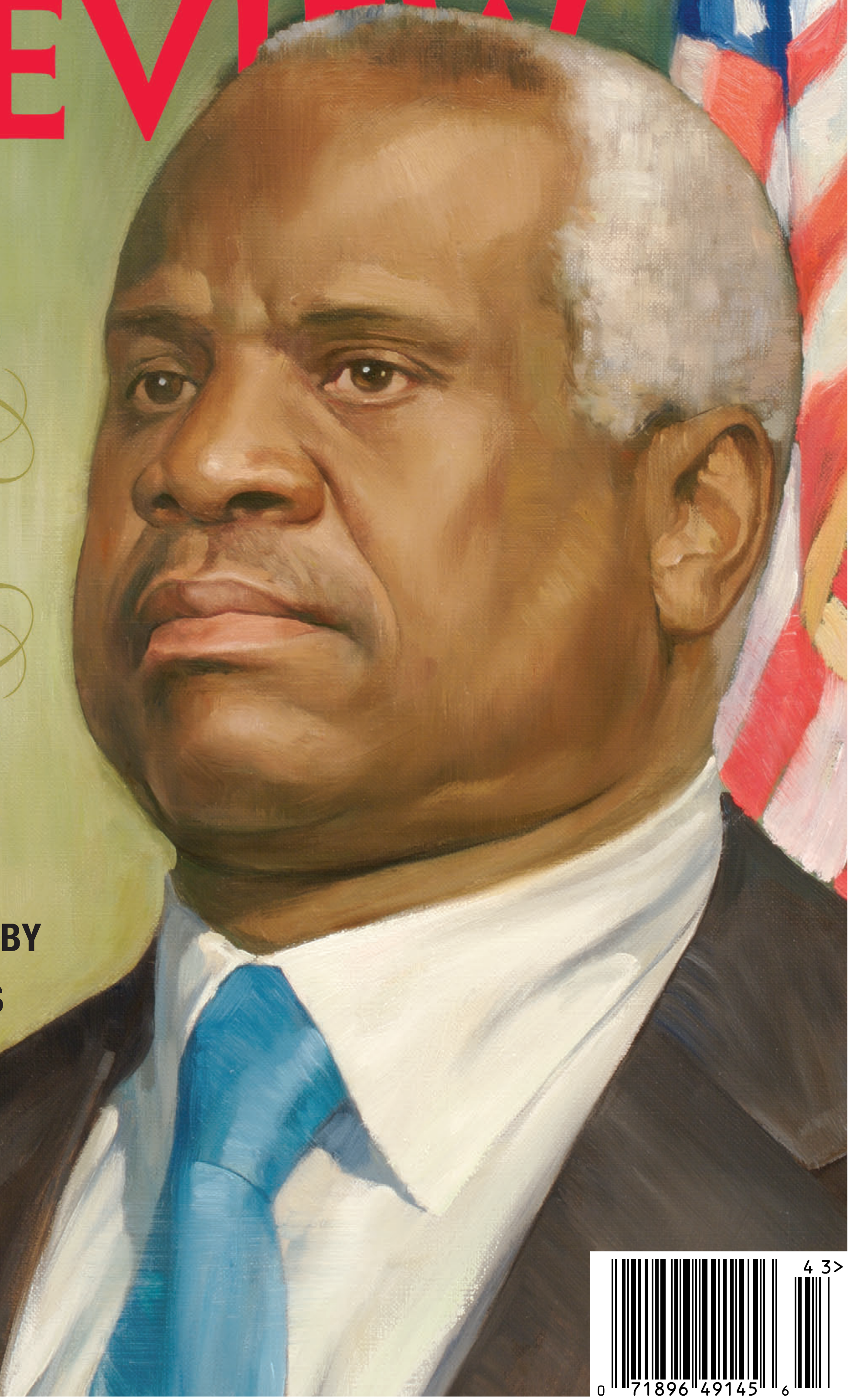

A Free Man

SHELBY STEELE
ON THE NEW MEMOIR BY
CLARENCE THOMAS

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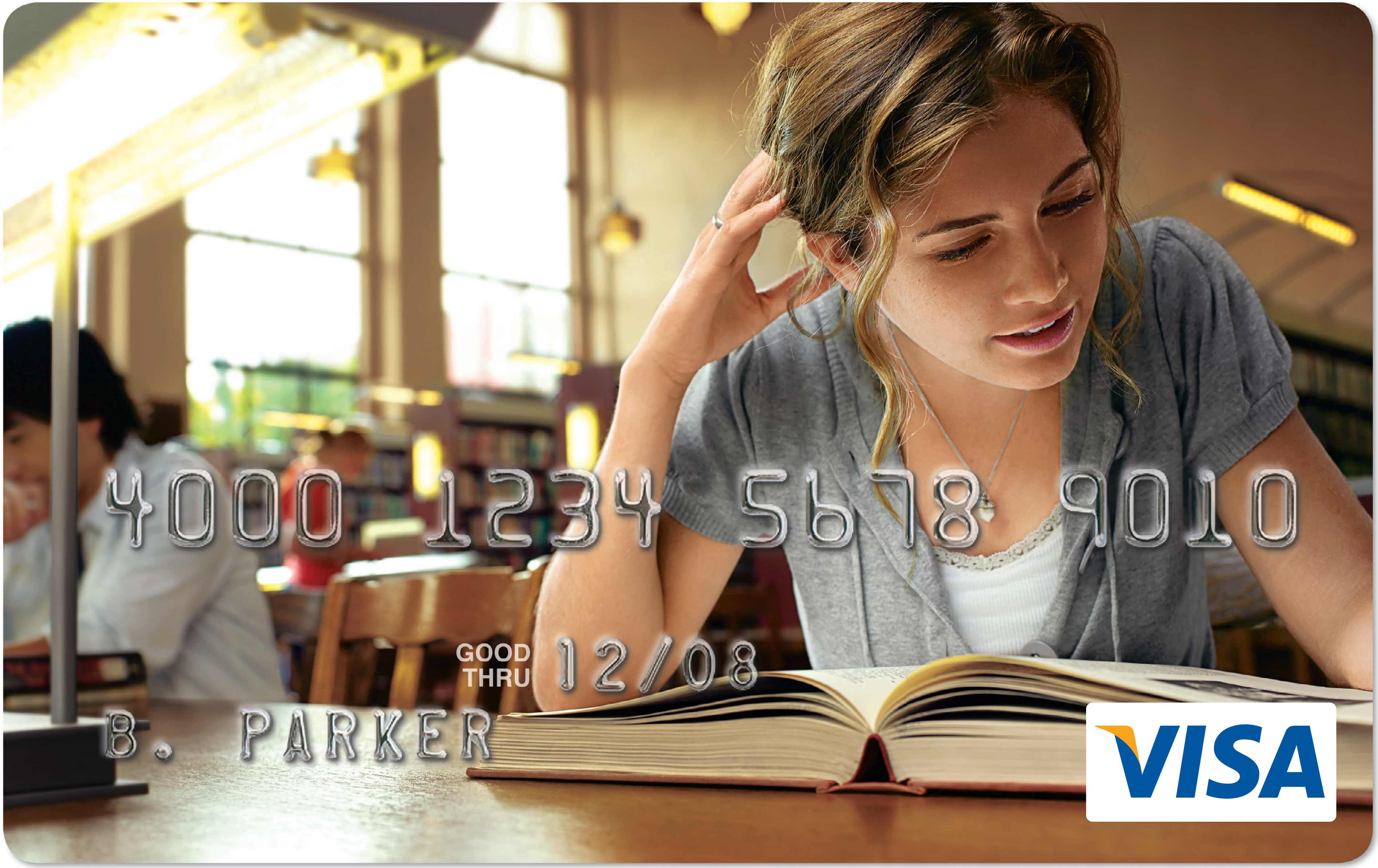

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OCTOBER 22, 2007 VOL. LIX, NO. 19

NATIONAL REVIEW

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■ COVER STORY

The Freest Black Man in America

The black individual is now emerging as something of a new archetype in American life—not someone who disowns his group but someone who rejects it as a master. Today there is no more quintessential embodiment of this new archetype than Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas. And now—in his new memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*—Justice Thomas offers up the rich details of his remarkable and often heroic struggle to become a man who simply thinks for himself. *By Shelby Steele*

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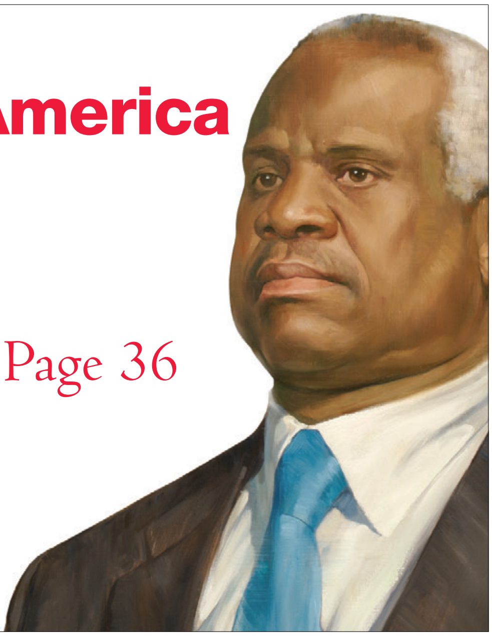

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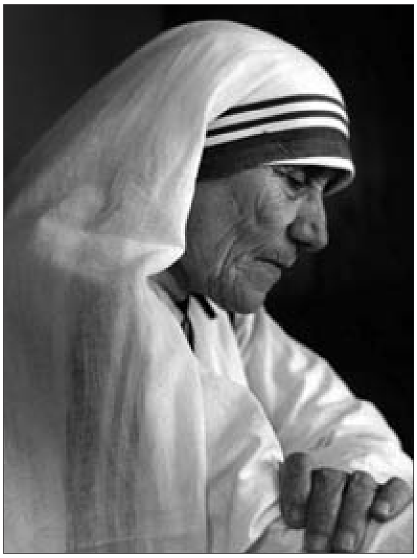

WAY OF LIGHT

Reading Michael Novak's piece on the suffering of Mother Teresa ("Way of Darkness," September 24), I recalled a thought offered to me years ago by an instructor in medical school: It is no feat to be civil to someone equally civil; rather, it is the true mettle of a physician to treat all as a friend, whether confronted with open arms or hostile demands. So it was with Mother Teresa, who became saintlier still in the presence of great squalor and misery, all the while facing her own demons of "emptiness, darkness, and inner pain." Mr. Novak's article on the torment she endured while maintaining her caring demeanor deserves to be read and reread by people of all religious persuasions, and especially by those of no persuasion at all.

Michael Salwitz
Payson, Ariz.

THE STATE OF D.C.

Jonah Goldberg missed one more reason to object to the District of Columbia's license-plate slogan, "Taxation Without Representation": It's hypocritical (The Week, October 8). If the District ever becomes a state, its first move will be to levy a tax on commuters, who will not be represented in D.C. government. Perhaps "Taxation Without Representation" is what the District really wants.

Les Leinaweaver
Alexandria, Va.

WORDPLAY

Rob Long's piece on school choice ("Choice for Me, but Not for Thee," October 8) was, as usual, on-target and to the point, but I thought it contained a spelling error. Shouldn't the reference to La Rodham's future performance be "a treasure trove of . . . contorted non-responses laced with *hillaryous* lies"?

Gary Gabbard
Independence, Mo.

FALL EDUCATION ISSUE
Jim Manzi on the Abuse of Evolution
NATIONAL REVIEW
The Face of Victory?
Mario Loyola, Richard Lowry—Tribalism and the War
www.nationalreview.com

ABU BIN FRED?

As I gazed at the cover of your October 8 issue, I said to myself, "What is Fred Thompson doing in that burnoose?"

Wally Harpen
Wilmington, Ohio

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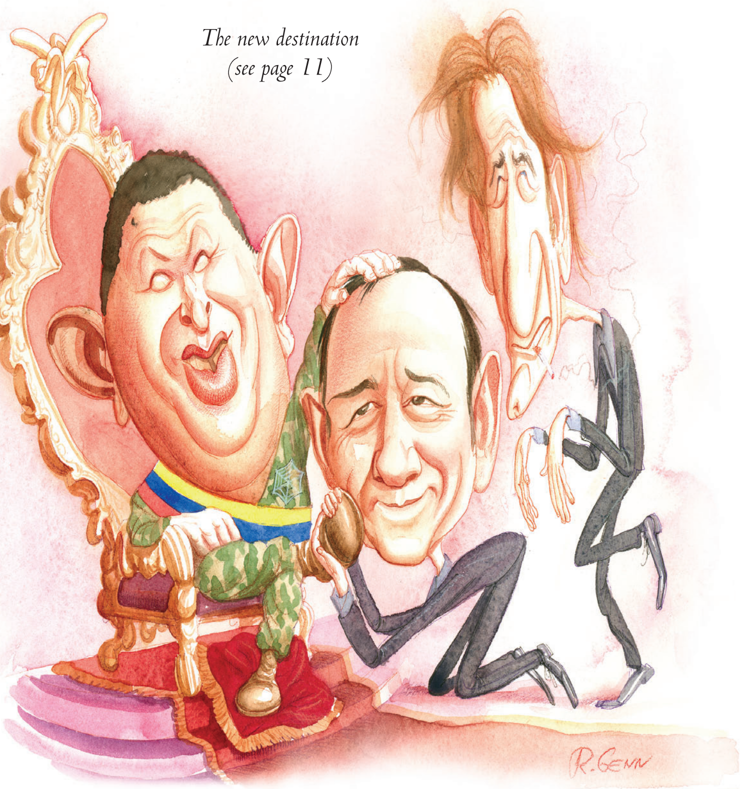
THE WEEK



The new destination (see page 11)

ROMAN GENN

■ If there were gays in Iran, would Ahmadinejad dress that badly?

■ Newt Gingrich says he will not run for president, and, in our opinion, the presidency is not a job to which he would be well suited. But he has spent many years thinking and talking—intelligently, boldly, and creatively—about some of the toughest challenges we face. His nonprofit, nonpartisan American Solutions recently hosted workshops around the country to tackle a range of issues: from tax reform to conservation to space policy. With GOP politicians able to borrow the initiatives that result from his latest project, Gingrich need not be a presidential candidate to have the influence he deserves.

■ John McCain said in an interview that he would prefer to have a Christian president, but could support a well-qualified Muslim one. We see no reason to object to his comment, although it may be the type of abstract speculation that a presidential candidate would be wise to avoid. Another comment was a bit of a head-scratcher: "The Constitution established the United States of America as a Christian nation. But I say that in the broadest sense." The U.S. is a Christian nation only in some senses—historically; sociologically—and, even in those senses, only in a qualified way. The Constitution did not establish our Christianity in any of those senses. McCain's campaign later clarified that he meant only that the values protected by the Constitution "are rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition." We know what McCain is getting at here: He is trying to push back against the modern liberal-secularist tendency to deny that Christianity has anything to do with our political principles. His heart is in the right place, even if, as is so often the case among Republicans, his mouth isn't.

■ Rudy Giuliani has proposed expanding NATO to include India, Israel, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. Australia, Singapore, and Japan would probably join, and be welcomed. But major European members of NATO are likely to resist Israeli membership, on the grounds that it would set them at odds with the Islamic world. Israel itself would probably balk at submitting national-security decisions to alliance consultation. And India might resist formal membership in the preeminent Western "club." The present NATO looks increasingly unreliable as a serious military contender. European NATO members spend little on defense, impose semi-pacifist rules of engagement on their soldiers, and devote scarce military resources to fantasies of a purely European defense force. America's next president should demand a far stronger European commitment to the alliance. If that fails, the next step will be to create a parallel global military alliance consisting of the U.S., other NATO members that take defense seriously (Britain, Turkey, Poland), and the nations that Giuliani has proposed. Such a strategy might even jolt NATO's weak sisters into a more serious military posture—and perhaps over time the two alliances would merge. For Giuliani's essential strategic vision is correct. He simply need remember that "all rising is by a winding stair."

■ Some social-conservative leaders are musing about supporting a third-party presidential candidate if Giuliani wins the Republican nomination. We'll defer considering the wisdom of such a contingency plan to another day. Come to think of it, shouldn't these activists defer this discussion too? It isn't as though they have pulled out all the stops to keep Giuliani from getting the nomination. They have not even reached a consensus on who should be the nominee. Survey data show that a lot of Republican primary voters are unaware of Giuliani's positions and record on abortion, guns, and amnesty. If an informed Republican electorate picks Giuliani, then social conservatives will have a difficult deci-

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In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Dying for Reform

Too much of the wrong kind of regulation at the FDA

During the past half century, the stunning pace of scientific progress has yielded powerful tools for pharmaceutical development, including rational drug design, combinatorial chemistry, gene-splicing, DNA sequencing, gene therapy, and genomics. These technologies have wrought a creative revolution fueled by massive public- and private-sector investment, enabling drug and biotechnology companies to produce innovative life-saving and life-enhancing medicines. . . . By imposing policies that hamper innovation, however, government actions can exert a significantly negative influence on drug development. Policies that will affect drug pricing and drug regulation are presently the subject of considerable debate in the United States and elsewhere, and there is growing momentum for governmental actions to address the perceived problems in these areas.

—Henry I Miller and David R. Henderson

The Military Is Not Enough

How to coordinate the civilian side of counterinsurgency

To counter the asymmetric advantage of homegrown insurgencies, policymakers in Washington must move beyond purely military solutions and take advantage of the gamut of nonmilitary assets, including economic, social, political, and law enforcement resources that constitute America's own asymmetric strengths. No other country in the world has the resources, skills, and international standing to bring to bear against our enemies. To coordinate the military and civilian agencies operating in geographic theaters, the president should appoint a civilian theater commander of sufficient experience and authority to understand and integrate all facets of the interagency community, especially the traditionally domestically oriented agencies that have so far been largely sidelined.

—Dana B. Dillon

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THE WEEK...

sion to make. If social-conservative leaders won't make the effort to inform that electorate, then they have bigger problems than the mayor.

■ Jesse Adam Macbeth became an antiwar hero when he claimed to have committed atrocities in Iraq as an Army Ranger, including the murders of hundreds of innocent civilians. A group called Iraq Veterans Against the War, among others, promoted his statements. But his was a tale told by a liar and believed by idiots. On September 21, Macbeth, who was never an Army Ranger, was sentenced to five months in a federal prison for making false statements to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The sordid story should have ended there, signifying merely how far a desperate Left will go in its efforts to smear the military. Several days later, however, Rush Limbaugh discussed Macbeth on his radio program and made a reference to the antiwar movement's fondness for "phony soldiers." Since then, war protesters who couldn't muster the nerve to criticize MoveOn.org for its "General Betray Us" advertisement in the *New York Times* have denounced Limbaugh. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Harry Reid, and 38 other Senate Democrats have joined them. All of them are pretending that Limbaugh was calling every soldier who opposes the war phony. They should have read the actual transcript of the talk-show host's remarks, rather than a tendentiously edited version distributed by Media Matters, a liberal group. Some "soldiers" are phony. So are some controversies.

KEVIN DEITSCH/UPI

■ Gen. Peter Pace has stepped down as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and retired from the Marines. Virginia Republicans should try to draft him for a new mission: a Senate campaign. Republican John Warner recently announced that he won't seek a new term in 2008. Pace would be an attractive candidate. He is a social conservative with impeccable military credentials. He's certainly more appealing than either of the two major Republicans who are preparing to run, Rep. Tom Davis and former governor Jim Gilmore. Neither Davis nor Gilmore is pro-life. On Iraq, both are actually to the left of Warner, whose own position on the war has been far from resolute. Moreover, either one would be a serious underdog to Mark Warner, a popular former governor who is the Democrats' likely nominee. Pace would be an underdog as well, but his candidacy would have the potential to excite conservatives. And our troops need more champions in the Senate.

■ Eliot Spitzer, governor of New York, wants to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. His executive order, to take effect in December, will lift the requirement that license applicants provide a valid Social Security number. This order violates a 1995 state law, and flies in the face of the federal Real ID Act, which requires states to meet certain standards in order for their driver's licenses to be acceptable ID for boarding planes or entering federal facilities. Spitzer thinks that presentation of a valid foreign passport—no current U.S. visa required—should be sufficient grounds for issuance of a license. This has been too much for the state's Republican legislators, who are threatening a lawsuit, and for several county clerks, who say they will not follow Spitzer's procedures. Even New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, an open-borders proponent, felt moved to make a mild protest (which Spitzer tore into as "wrong at every level—dead wrong: factually wrong, legally wrong, morally wrong, ethically wrong"). Absent from the controversy at press time were New York's two U.S. senators, neither of whom has made any audible comment at all.

■ Blackwater, the private security firm, has lost its license to operate in Iraq. The Iraqi interior ministry accuses it of using excessive force during a shootout in which eight people were killed. Contrary to a lot of press accounts about the controversy, Blackwater's employees in Iraq are not above the law and never have been. They are almost always subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and to Iraqi law. Additional clarity on how to enforce the rules on private contractors in military conflicts is something Congress could usefully provide. It may also be that we are relying too much on contractors because our military is too small, something else that is in the power of Congress to correct. Henry Waxman has begun congressional oversight hearings. He will take up these questions if he is interested in more than bashing Blackwater.

■ The decline of the dollar—it is now worth less than Canadian currency!—is more than an indignity. It is a sign that our monetary policy is too loose, and that the threat of inflation is rising. And not the only sign: The price of gold shot up to its highest level since 1980 when the Fed announced it was cutting interest rates. Over the next few

AHMADINEJAD'S COMEUPPANCE

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Places! Where an ivied wall
Heretofore—I'm still in shock—
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—W. H. VON DREELE

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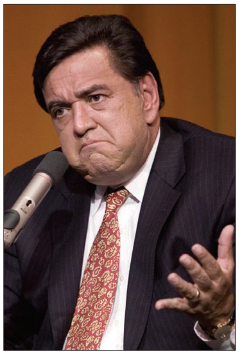
THE WEEK…

years, reducing inflation will almost certainly require painful increases in interest rates: larger increases than would have been necessary if the Fed had not shot some of its credibility as an inflation fighter.

■ As Americans wonder how to cope with Iran, Iran keeps killing Americans. The primary battleground is Iraq, where agents of Iran's Revolutionary Guards fund and arm the Shiite extremists whose IEDs pierce the armor of U.S. soldiers and whose bombs massacre Iraqi civilians. A majority of senators faced these unpleasant facts by passing the Lieberman-Kyl amendment, which expresses the sense of the Senate that the U.S. should "stop inside Iraq" Iran's "violent activities and destabilizing influence." It counsels doing so "through the prudent and calibrated use of all instruments of United States national power in Iraq, including diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and military instruments." It also urges the administration to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization. Such hortatory language cannot stop the mullahs' designs. But there is a possibility that President Bush still can, and the amendment gives him cover to try. We hope he puts it to good use.



KIMBERLY WHITE/REUTERS

■ There has been little reaction to the Lieberman-Kyl amendment on the Muslim street, but some of our politicians are taking offense for the silent billion. Said Bill Richardson, governor of New Mexico and Democratic presidential candidate: "Calling them names, labeling them terrorists, drawing up military options is just making the situation worse and inflaming the Muslim world." Cartoons drive them wild, military strategizing gets their goat, and name-calling is a no-no. Is the Muslim world made up of a billion children, in Richardson's imagining? We're lucky they don't mind being patronized, too.

The Games We Play

THERE have been two seismic events in popular culture this year. The first was the release of J. K. Rowling's conclusion to her wildly popular Harry Potter series. The final installment, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, rang up about $170 million in sales in the United States . . . on its first day. The second event, which occurred in late September, was the release of Microsoft's unbelievably popular computer game "Halo 3." It rang up almost exactly the same one-day sales in the United States as *Potter*.

The accompanying chart puts the sales of these two products in perspective. On their first days, *Potter* and "Halo 3" outsold the opening weekend for the hottest movie of the year, the entire season of ticket sales for the New York Yankees, and even the first weekend of the iPhone. If we run the sales totals forward, the numbers get even more striking. Microsoft is rumored to expect about $1 billion in "Halo 3"-related sales in the coming year.

Most of my classmates shared the same media experiences I did when I was young. We watched *All in the Family* and *M*A*S*H* on television, and saw the same movies, from *The Love Bug* to *Star Wars*. Today's kids know *Potter* and the most popular video games equally well.

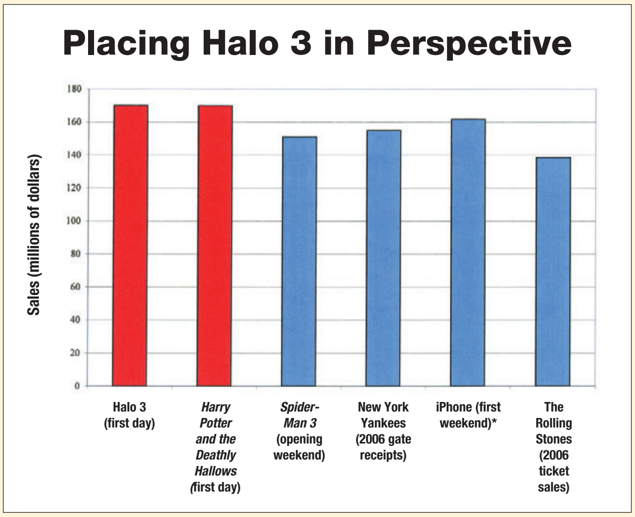
But back then, our parents shared in those experiences. One might even argue that they provided context for conversations that tightened familial bonds. Today, however, many parents share the experiences of their children when they involve traditional media, but not video games.

The games may be opening a growing experience gap between the generations. Video-game sales this year are expected to total about $10 billion, just a tad less than expected total box-office receipts. But older Americans go to the movies, and rarely play video games, especially games on consoles. And a movie lasts a few hours, while a good video game will attract a player for days on end.

The lesson is clear: Our children are growing up in an environment where the dominant form of entertainment is essentially unexplored territory to their parents and grandparents.

By far the biggest cost of this will be the countless conversations that do not happen because of the absence of shared experience. Wary of this, I have begun my own intensive effort to stay in tune with today's generation. I can report from the front lines that it is so much fun out here that the kids are having trouble getting the video-game controller away from their dad.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



Placing Halo 3 in Perspective

SOURCES: *NEW YORK TIMES*, BOXOFFICEMOJO.COM, FORBES.COM, WSJ.COM, POLLSTAR
*BASED ON AUTHOR'S CALCULATIONS

Office of National Drug Control Policy

Msg (104)
Cancel
Abc

mnE Ps dnt bleev
der is a gNR8N d/c
b/t em n thr teen

DO YOU SPEAK TEEN?

mnE Ps dnt bleev der is a gNR8N d/c b/t em n thr teen. (Text Message Translation: Many parents don't believe there is a generation disconnect between them and their teen.) How much do parents really know about their teen's world? Especially as teens adapt to new technologies so quickly?

Unfortunately, parents still see only a glimpse of the world in which their teens live. The numbers are alarming:

- 80% of parents believe drugs and alcohol are usually not available at parties their teens attend, but the reality is sobering: 50% of teen partygoers attend parties where alcohol, drugs or both are available.[1]
- Prescription drugs, illegally used to get high, are the second most abused type of drug by teens, right behind marijuana.[2]
- The story isn't much different online: Three-fourths of teens report that their parents "almost never" monitor the Web sites they frequent or the time they spend online.[3]

There is good news. The majority of teens still report that their parents—not their peers or the media—have the biggest influence on their decision to stay drug-free. To learn more about how parents like you are connecting better with their teens, try these Action Items and report back at www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles:

- Type "smoking weed" into a Web search engine and see what your teen is exposed to.
- Find out what the drug slang terms—"blazed," "xanibars," "a blunt" and "robotripping"—really mean.
- Type the name of your teen's high school into the "search" bar of a popular teen social networking site and browse the profiles.

Teens may be a hard study, but knowing more about their world—and the pressures and influences surrounding them—will help you connect better with your child and help keep him or her healthy and drug-free.

For more tips on keeping your teen drug-free, visit **www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles** or call **1-800-788-2800**.

Signed,

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[1] The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. August 2006.

[2] Monitoring the Future, National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2006.

[3] Teen Media: Parental Monitoring of the Internet, The TRU Study, Fall 2006 Wave 48. TRU, 2006.

THE WEEK...

■ U.S. government officials have now anonymously confirmed to reporters that the target of a Sept. 6 Israeli raid on Syria was a suspected nuclear site—one that allegedly operated in cooperation with North Korea. North Korea denies the claim, which should persuade you only if you make a habit of believing liars. Unfortunately, this habit seems to be prevalent at the State Department. There, Christopher Hill's negotiations with the regime of Kim Jong Il continue as though the raid had never happened and the site never existed. The latest round of six-party talks did not, by all accounts, address allegations of North Korean nuclear aid to Syria, and the U.S. continues to move toward normalizing relations with Pyongyang. It seems that "trust but verify" has been replaced by "trust—and when the world gives you evidence that you shouldn't, trust some more."

PATRICK DURAND/ABACA PRESS

■ Few regimes on earth can compete with the Burmese junta for pure evil. It has condoned, indeed encouraged, decades of civil war and genocide, and turned a once-prosperous country into an impoverished and oppressed hellhole. While not a direct strategic threat to the U.S., it is at least a worry: Its ties with Beijing give the Chinese army access to the Indian Ocean; its army of 400,000 intimidates other Southeast Asian countries, complicating American efforts to forge alliances in the region; and it has purchased a nuclear reactor from Russia, raising the possibility that it wishes to proliferate. It would have been both a strategic and a moral triumph, then, if the protests that rocked Burma in recent weeks had toppled the generals. Sadly, the junta's crackdown seems to have been effective: An unknown number of demonstrators were shot; some 4,000 Buddhist monks—who took a leading role in the revolt—were imprisoned, with reports of a massacre in at least one monastery; and a calm enforced by machine gun descended upon the streets of Rangoon. President Bush was right to give voice to the aspirations of the Burmese people in his U.N. address. He should keep sending that message.

■ The Burmese have endured military dictatorship since Gen. Ne Win's coup against the post-independence parliamentary republic in 1962. Widespread public protests in 1988 were suppressed with great brutality, but led to a change of dictators, the new junta becoming known by the grimly Tolkienian acronym SLORC (for State Law and Order Restoration Council). SLORC renamed the nation "Myanmar" in 1989. The outside world then divided into those who adopted the new name (France, Japan, the U.N., *The Economist*) and those who stuck with Burma out of deference to the nation's democracy movement (the U.S., the U.K., Australia, National Review). SLORC annulled national elections in 1990 because the results displeased them. They have since renamed themselves the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council), and the nation they are choking remains Myanmar—in their own publications, at the U.N., and elsewhere. But not in our pages.

■ Nuon Chea, the number-two leader of the Khmer Rouge, was arrested in Phnom Penh and charged with crimes against humanity. He has been called the Khmer Rouge's chief ideologue. But that is an abstract term. The war-crimes tribunal put it better: Nuon Chea "planned, instigated, ordered, directed or otherwise aided and abetted in the commission [of] murder, torture, imprisonment, persecution, extermination, deportation, forcible transfer, enslavement and other inhumane acts." Last year, expecting his arrest and trial, he told a Cambodian newspaper, "I don't think there will be justice." And he is right, for if he is to die in bed an octogenarian—even on the stiff cot of a prison—it will come 30 years too late for the millions he helped to murder. Now would be a good time to remember the wages of withdrawal, defeat, and abandonment.

■ President Bush announced that he would attend the summer Olympics in Beijing in August 2008. "It's going to be a great moment of pride for the Chinese people," Bush said. He is correct. The current phase of Chinese Communism, corresponding to the post-Jacobin Directorate of the French Revolution, has harnessed prosperity, limited freedom, and nationalistic self-assertion. Those who push freedom's narrow limits—dissidents, adherents of unlicensed religions, unhappy workers and ethnics—suffer imprisonment and death. Bush knows this too, for he said that "China's leaders" could "show confidence by demonstrating a commitment to greater openness and tolerance," implying that he will lobby them privately to do so. The engagement tango is a delicate dance; the tyrants often lead, and their partners—President Bush and his successors—must be ready for the moment when a Bonaparte decides to stop dancing and knock heads, abroad as well as at home.

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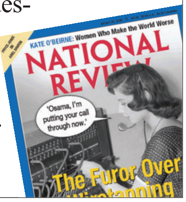
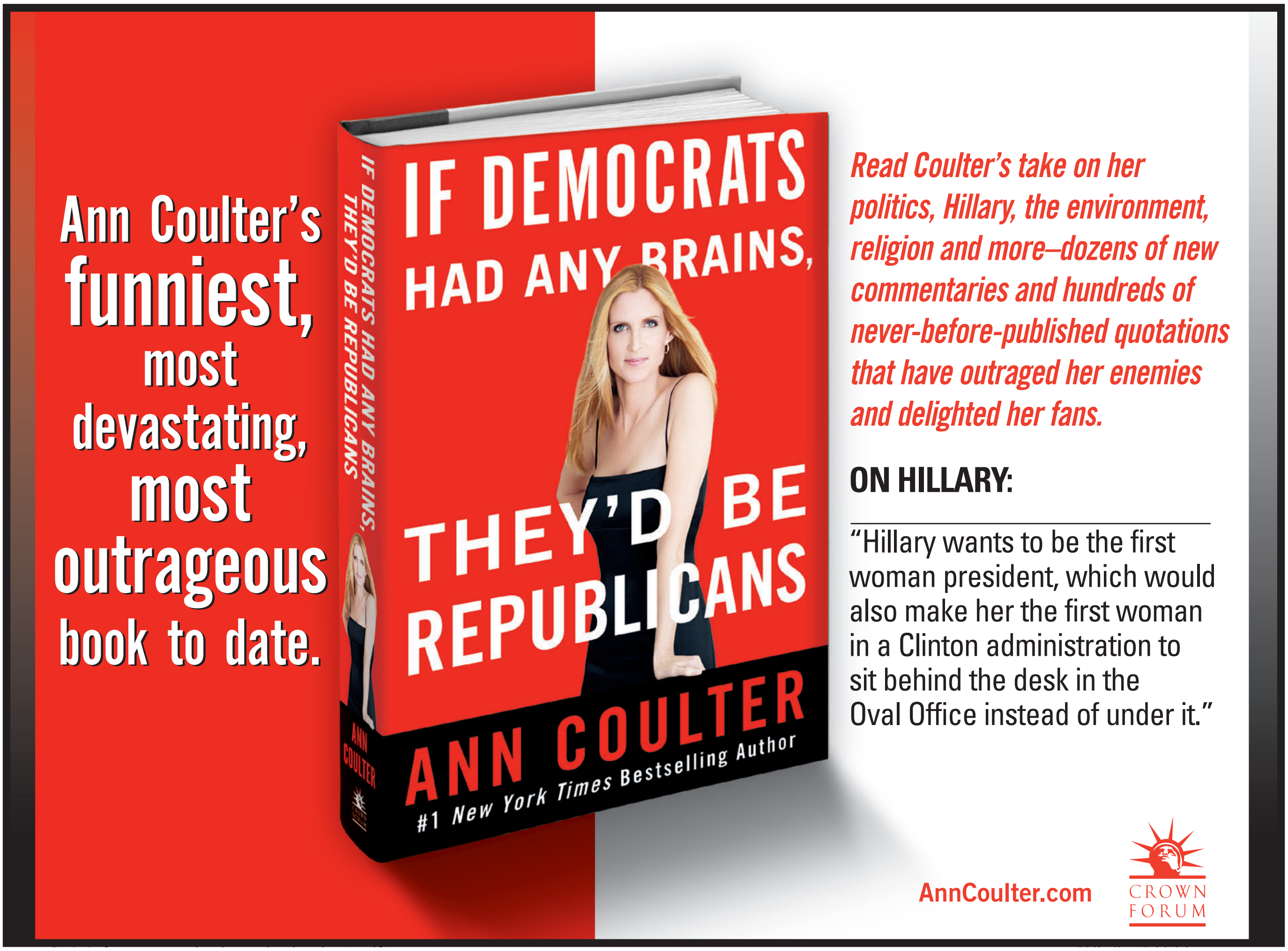

KATE O'BEIRNE: Women Who Make the World Worse
NATIONAL REVIEW
'Osama, I'm putting your call through now.'
The Furor Over Wiretapping

■ For Britain's Conservatives, the stakes could hardly be higher. David Cameron and his shadow cabinet are young and untested, and in Gordon Brown they are up against an experienced politician. Brown doesn't have to call an election for three years, but in late June he simply stepped into Blair's shoes by acclamation, and he could do with a mandate of his own. Opinion polls are showing that he has a significant lead, and many in his Labour party believe that a snap election would not merely defeat the Conservatives but knock them out of the ring, perhaps forever. The polls are volatile, though, and Brown could weaken his position needlessly. An election is a risky gamble that the notoriously cautious Brown may or may not take, and everyone is on tenterhooks weighing the pros and cons. At their annual party conference, the Cameron team have put a brave face on it, sketched out some promising tax cuts, and are challenging Brown to bring on an election. They're gambling too, with even greater risk.

■ For years and years, they have trooped down to Castro—a galaxy of Hollywood stars: Robert Redford, Jack Nicholson, Steven Spielberg; Naomi Campbell, Kate Moss, Leonardo DiCaprio. Carole King sang "You've Got a Friend" to him. Does he ever—many friends. Though not the tortured Cubans in his dungeons. Castro can't last forever, and Hollywood will need a new destination tyrant, especially if Raúl proves unsexy. Never fear: Hugo Chávez, down in Venezuela, is available. Sean Penn and Danny Glover have trooped to him. And, just the other day, Kevin Spacey had three hours with him. Afterward, "they shook hands warmly" on the red carpet of Chávez's presidential palace. (So reported the AP.) We're lucky all they did was shake hands. It's easy to make fun of our stars and their political antics. But there is something sick about the compulsion of such stars to bend the knee to tyrants—so long as those tyrants are "progressive" and anti-American.

■ Six high-school students assaulted another one, knocking him unconscious and kicking him. The six students are being prosecuted for the assault. That is as it should be, and there would be no controversy about it except for two things. The first is that the initial charge was attempted murder, which was a questionable call: The victim was out of the hospital in two hours and was able to attend a school ceremony later the same day (although the pain made him leave early). The second is that the victim was white, the perpetrators were black, and the school and the town—Jena, La.—have an ugly racial history. According to some reports, earlier in the school year black students sat under a tree that was traditionally reserved for the white kids, and nooses were hanging from it the next morning. The "Jena 6" have become a civil-rights cause.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CROWN FORUM

THE WEEK...

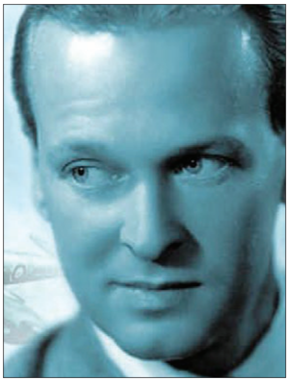
Protesters are asking why the authorities didn't go after the kids who hung the nooses. Disciplinary action should have been taken, if the culprits could have been identified. But there are perfectly good reasons to treat such ugly racial incidents less harshly than a physical assault. The "Jena 6" are not the victims in this story.

■ One fine day, "Don't tase me, bro'" replaced "The senator assumes a wide stance" as the number-one buzz-sentence in America. That was the day when Andrew Meyer, a student at the University of Florida, disrupted a John Kerry event. As the police tried to escort him out of the room, Meyer resisted. And toward the end of his struggle, he uttered the immortal words, "Don't tase me, bro'!" But tase him the bro' did. After the event, there was some dark commentary about "fascism" and the use of this police weapon. But what would the commentary have been if the day's speaker had been, not some good liberal like John Kerry, but a big bad conservative, like, say, Mitt Romney? The commentary would have been far darker, and louder. The press would have linked the tasing to conservatism itself. By the time they were done, they would have placed the weapon in Romney's hand—or NATIONAL REVIEW's hand. We were lucky that John Kerry was speaking. Which is a sentence, though not a buzz-sentence, we could not have imagined ourselves uttering.

■ Back in June of this year the mayor of Kansas City, Mo., appointed Frances Semler, a 73-year-old grandmother, to the city's five-member parks board. It then emerged that Mrs. Semler is a member of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, a nationwide citizens' organization that advocates (why does it need advocating?) enforcement of federal immigration laws. That woke the "diversity" Furies. The National Council of La Raza threatened to pull its 2009 convention from Kansas City. NAACP chairman Julian Bond has said his organization will follow suit with its 2010 convention. The *Kansas City Star* ran an editorial calling on the mayor to fire Mrs. Semler for her membership of "a group linked to vigilante actions along the country's southern border." (Linked by whom?) Mrs. Semler was obliged to call the police when a group of six activists, one a minister of religion, showed up on her doorstep, having first called to make sure she was home, and repeatedly rang her bell and pounded on her door. "It was not meant to be intimidating," one door-pounder said later. Of course not. So far, to his great credit, Mayor Mark Funkhouser is standing by Mrs. Semler against the thugs and bullies of "compassion" and "inclusion."

■ The judges are still studying the photo finish, but the Self-Hatred Hundred Yard Dash held in conjunction with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to New York brought out two superb athletes. Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss led a group of Jews United Against Zionism in a visit with the Iranian president. "He's not anti-Semitic," Rabbi Weiss explained, "he just wants to get rid of Zionism and the state of Israel." Rabbi Weiss gave Ahmadinejad a silver fruit bowl "as a token of our appreciation for his sweetness and love of the Jewish people and all mankind." An impressive performance, but that didn't faze "sallykohn," a Jewish lesbian blogger at the *Daily Kos*, who admitted that Ahmadinejad would "probably have me killed," but went on to say that "the guy speaks some blunt truths about the Bush administration that make me swoon." Also, she wrote, "he just looks cuddly. Possibly cuddly enough to turn me straight." And the winner is . . .

■ The United Auto Workers and GM have hammered out a new agreement after a short-lived strike. The big news is that the UAW agreed to let GM hire new workers at lower wages and freeze the pay of current employees. It offered these concessions because it knew GM could not survive without them. The automaker's long-term health-care obligations to its workers total some $51 billion—more than twice GM's market capitalization. In effect, the union has negotiated its employer into insolvency, an arrangement which benefits no one. Let us hope that, going forward, the union's self-interest will be tempered by an appreciation of economic reality.



■ Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema was a Dutch war hero whose exploits earned him the proud title of Soldier of Orange, a tribute to his service to the Dutch royal family, historically known as the House of Orange. He was a fun-loving student when the Germans occupied Holland. That occupation was ruthless. The Dutch had a thriving Nazi party of their own, and many collaborated. Over 100,000 of the country's 140,000 Jews were murdered, proportionately one of the highest killing rates in Europe. Roelfzema joined the underground, and shot it out with the Germans before escaping by boat to England. From there, he returned on secret missions to run agents and equipment in and out of Holland. As if that were not enough, he became a bomber pilot in the British air force. When Holland was liberated, he flew the royal family home, and helped the present Queen Beatrix, then seven, take her first steps on free Dutch soil. Eventually he settled in Hawaii, and writing autobiographies including one called *Soldier of Orange*, made into a successful film. "Behind every soldier decorated with military honors," he recently told an interviewer, "there are a hundred anonymous heroes, some of them greater. I had the fortune to be recognized, and to grow old." The modesty is all of a piece with the bravery of the man. He was 90 when he died. R.I.P.

■ For a generation, the National Taxpayers Union has rallied behind a simple slogan: "This is your money and the government should return it to you." For a decade, John Berthoud was NTU's steady leader, a rock-solid presence in Washington, a city that often seems more interested in exploiting

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taxpayers than empowering them. He wasn't one of the flashiest defenders of small government, but his constant and principled advocacy made a difference. His sudden death on September 27, at the age of 45, came far too soon. It prompted one colleague to comment: "Whatever the tax rate is in heaven, when we get there John will have lowered it." R.I.P.

MICHEL BOUTEFEU/GETTY

■ The world has lost Marcel Marceau, its best-known practitioner of the tiny art of mime. Marceau plowed his narrow furrow for 60 years, bringing pleasure to millions and harm to no one. Indeed, as a member of the French Resistance in WWII, Marceau saved lives, spiriting children across the border into neutral Switzerland with documents he had forged himself. (His father died in Auschwitz.) Marceau's art is deeply unfashionable nowadays. People groan reflexively when a mime shows up. Perhaps this is because our senses are so relentlessly flooded with images that we can no longer appreciate a performer who makes demands on our withered imaginations. Or perhaps it is that in a world of elevator music, shrieking car alarms, beeping gadgets, and people yammering into cellphones all around us, an art molded out of silence is incomprehensible to us. Whatever the reason, if we have lost mime, we have lost something small but good. Marcel Marceau, rest in peace.

THE LAW

A Model Justice

MORSE V. *FREDERICK*, a Supreme Court case from the last term, concerned whether a principal could order a student to take down a banner reading "BONG HiTS 4 JESUS" at a school event, and suspend that student when he refused. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the Court, ruled that the principal was within her rights: She reasonably concluded that the banner promoted illegal drug use, and the government has an interest in discouraging drug use. Justices Samuel Alito and Anthony Kennedy agreed with Roberts, but stressed that drugs were a special case, and that schools could not impose broader restrictions on speech. Three liberal justices, led by John Paul Stevens, said that the Court had done "serious violence to the First Amendment" by allowing the student to be punished.

Justice Clarence Thomas came at the case from a different angle. Instead of arguing about what the banner really meant, or whether it would have led to increased drug use, he went straight to a deeper question: What business of the Court is it what disciplinary policies schools adopt? Examining the historical record, Thomas found no evidence that the First Amendment was meant to involve the justices in policing the schools in this fashion. The amendment, that is, was never understood to create a right that students could assert against schools in federal court. The Supreme Court had created such a right in a 1969 case, called *Tinker*, that the other justices treated as canonical. Thomas dismissed that decision as "without basis in the Constitution."

It was vintage Thomas. He was willing to stand alone: No other justice joined his opinion. He was willing to look at the historical record to establish the original meaning of the Constitution rather than just to look at the Court's own precedents—and willing, as well, to discard precedents, however lauded, that conflicted with that original meaning. He was willing to be ignored: The other justices didn't take on his argument. And he was willing to be misunderstood: Media accounts conveyed the impression that Thomas had endorsed draconian school policies. He didn't impose a "conservative" policy on schools; he took the Court out of the picture. That, too, is a typical Thomas move, but one atypical for the justices.

Justice Thomas doesn't bat 1.000 in our eyes. His opinions on racial preferences, while well-reasoned in important respects, would be stronger if they engaged in thorough historical analyses of the Fourteenth Amendment. But his jurisprudence has been, in general, courageous, thoughtful, and—not least—right. His new memoir, which covers his life up through his swearing-in as an associate justice, is inspiring; but it is his life since then that we honor. He is one of the best justices—if not the best—on the Court.

AT WAR

Words Better Unspoken

IRANIAN president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at Columbia had one memorable line: his statement that "we don't have homosexuals like in your country." Quite right, since whenever Iranian gays act incautiously enough to be noticed, they are hanged. No Fire Island in the Islamic Republic.

It is hard to imagine a more thorough debacle. Columbia president Lee Bollinger, who introduced Ahmadinejad, tried to be a profile in courage, laying out his record on tyranny, terrorism, killing American soldiers, denying the first Holocaust and planning the second. But these blunt truths raised an embarrassing question: Why invite the agents of such policies to speak, since they are necessarily accompanied by lies and intellectual paralysis (in Ahmadinejad's case, messianic as well as ideological)? What could he say that would be unscripted, and what room is there in his script, besides submission, for the people in his audience? Having invited him, the only recourse was to disdain him, but then this looked like a bear-baiting. These difficulties

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were anticipated 45 years ago when William F. Buckley Jr. successfully urged the Yale Political Union to disinvite the American Communist Gus Hall. "Fight the tyrants everywhere," Buckley said, "but do not ask them to your quarters merely to spit on them, and do not ask them to your quarters if you cannot spit on them." Bollinger spat away.

Brave students at Tehran University taunted Ahmadinejad to come there when he got back and answer their questions. He declined, no surprise. But then the Iranians already know they are oppressed.

Meanwhile Ahmadinejad got his TV moments for the home market, suitably edited. Brave students at Tehran University taunted him to come there when he got back and answer their questions. He declined, no surprise. But then the Iranians already know they are oppressed.

Perhaps the worst aspect of the whole affair was its narcissism, the presumption that Gotham PR spectacles are the center of the world. Ahmadinejad, who is only one of the ruling figures in his country (and not the most powerful), wished to encourage that presumption, presenting himself as the frontman of a civilizational struggle. Meanwhile, Iran's nuclear program continues, as does its fishing in troubled waters. (The latest word is that the Iranians are smuggling surface-to-air missiles into Iraq, the better to kill Americans.) Accomplishing the first goal will make Iran even more brazen in pursuing the second. The capability to wage nuclear war will be a force multiplier for covert and conventional war. So far, the United States has been not much more effective dealing with this problem than Lee Bollinger.

PUBLIC POLICY

A Healthy Veto

Democrats say that we shouldn't worry about the cost of their bill to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program. They say that we will spend less on S-CHIP all year than we spend on Iraq in one month. That's true, in the short run. But the Iraq War will one day end. A new entitlement won't. Instead, it will grow and grow.

Future fiscal crises are built into the design of S-CHIP. It is funded through cigarette taxes, and will be underfunded to the extent that those taxes succeed in discouraging smoking. But that's the least of the program's flaws. Under the Democrats' bill, states will be able to expand benefits and stick the federal government with two-thirds of the tab. The Medicaid program shows us how these incentives will work. Benefits will expand. When times are good, governors and state legislators will be able to offer voters $3 in services for every $1 in state taxes. When times are bad, the politicians will suddenly discover that they have to cut services by $3 for every $1 in savings.

Rich blue states will spend the most, and thus get the most federal dollars. Half of all Medicaid spending goes to nine states. Republican congressmen who voted for the S-CHIP bill are voting to transfer money from red states to blue ones.

They're also voting for high marginal tax rates on the poor. S-CHIP, in combination with other federal programs, creates a poverty trap: Many people will find that if they get ahead, their benefits will fall and they'll be left behind where they started.

Expanding S-CHIP will get coverage to some children who would not otherwise have had it. Although there is little evidence that this is a cost-effective way to improve children's health, presumably some of these kids will be able to have better preventive care. Other kids, however, will lose their private insurance and end up with worse coverage.

Insurance is unaffordable in some of the states that most want to see S-CHIP expanded. But that's the result of those states' own regulations. New Jersey doesn't have higher insurance prices than Pennsylvania because of an act of God, but because of acts of the legislature.

Congressional Republicans—and especially the Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee—should have tried to reduce the regulatory obstacles to buying affordable health insurance. They should have pushed to let consumers buy insurance from out of state, thus bypassing the types of regulations that New Jersey has enacted. Or they could have forced Democrats to end the tax penalty on individually purchased insurance if they wanted any S-CHIP expansion at all.

S-CHIP, in combination with other federal programs, creates a poverty trap: Many people will find that if they get ahead, their benefits will fall and they'll be left behind where they started.

The leading Republican on the committee, Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, instead capitulated. He said that while he supports free-market reforms, it is unrealistic to expect this Congress to approve them. It is a pathetic excuse: He should have told his Democratic colleagues that it is unrealistic to expect a Republican president to sign such a liberal bill.

By the time you read this editorial, President Bush will have vetoed this bill. He should be proud to have done it.

■ Help Wanted: National Review is looking for a deputy managing editor. What's needed is a talent for editing, and experience with editing; broad political and cultural knowledge; and knowledge of National Review, plus an enthusiasm for it. Please send a résumé and—of at least equal importance—a letter of interest to Erica Stalnecker, at estalnecker@nationalreview.com.

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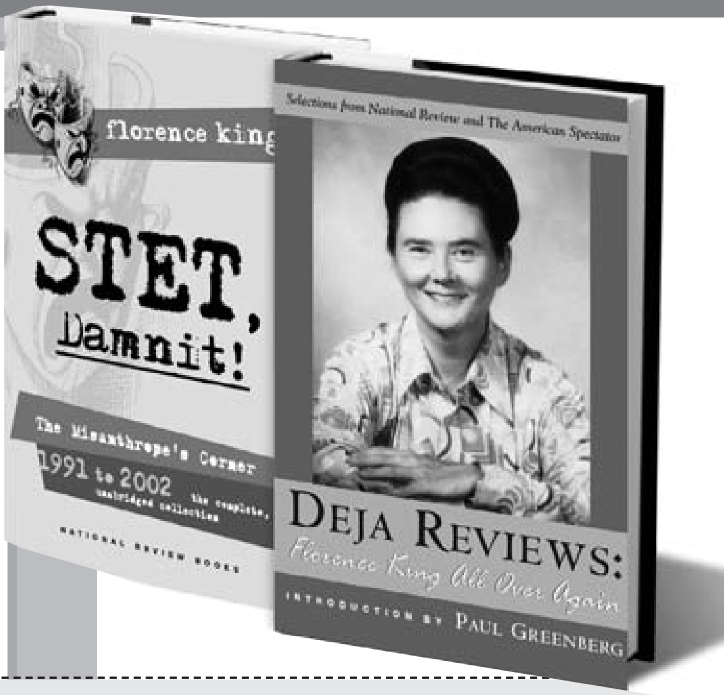
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INTRODUCTION BY PAUL GREENBERG

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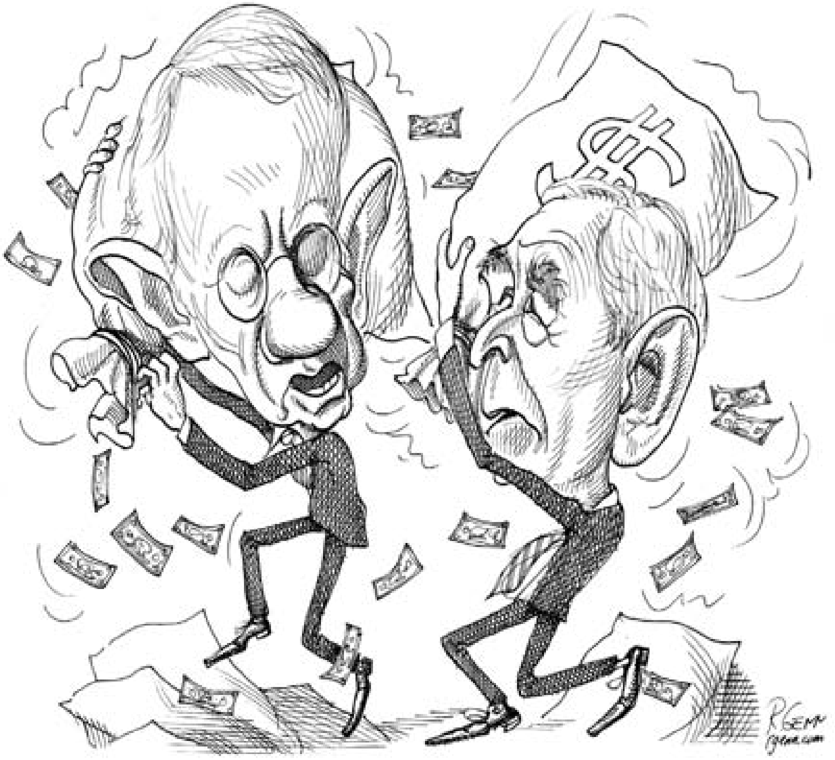

■ WASHINGTON ■

Wars Budgetary And Military

A showdown between Bush and Congress

KATE O'BEIRNE

With a resolute President Bush vowing to veto nine of the twelve appropriations bills making their way through Congress, the White House eagerly anticipates a spending showdown that will unite and enthuse its dispirited supporters. The bloated bills exceed the president's own increases in domestic discretionary spending this year by $22 billion.

A beleaguered Bush on offense in a fight over fiscal discipline that draws sharp distinctions between the parties would be welcome. Unfortunately, the long-overdue battle to control spending promises to be more about war than waste, and to reveal that self-serving spending is a truly bipartisan offense—with the result that disillusioned conservatives will be unlikely to man the barricades.

With the ongoing, divisive fight over the war in Iraq—and following the destructive internecine warfare over immigration reform—the president would understandably relish a good old-fashioned left–right spat over spending. Clearly, that is what he hopes to have: The administration's statements in response to this year's crop of appropriations bills include emphatic assertions that the president *will* veto the bills if not modified, rather than the more flexible prediction that his advisers *would recommend* a veto of the bills in their present form.

For a variety of reasons, Bush didn't veto any spending bills in his first six years in office. But he appears determined to crack down on Congress now that the Democrats are in charge. He recently declared: "Earlier this year congressional leaders promised to show that they could be responsible with the people's money. Unfortunately, they seem to have chosen the path of higher spending."

Bush's conservative critics fault him for having been on that very same path in the past. Federal spending increased by 33 percent during his first term, and is up by over 20 percent in his second term. Thanks to record tax revenues, however, the budget deficit is down by 58 percent, to a five-year low of $158 billion.

The looming showdown is over domestic discretionary spending. The president's budget for next year increases it by 6.8 percent, to $933 billion; the bills pending in Congress total $955 billion. (The overall federal budget for next year is $2.9 trillion.)

The White House intends to portray the extra $22 billion in spending, which it claims will balloon tenfold over the next several years, as the handiwork of a liberal, big-spending Congress. Congressional Democrats intend to portray the war in Iraq as a hugely expensive undertaking that shortchanges domestic needs. The spending fight will basically open another front in Congress's battle over the Iraq War.

The president who now demands fiscal restraint will be accused of spending $10 billion a month on an unpopular war. We can expect to hear that *what's being spent in just the next two months in Iraq could fund all the critical benefits for Americans that President Bush opposes.* In a recent column in the *Washington*

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Post, E. J. Dionne noted the Democrats' use of this line of attack in the fight over expanding the S-CHIP health-insurance program. He noted the president's $200 billion spending request for Iraq and Afghanistan this year and explained, "Democrats are arguing that 41 days' worth of Iraq spending would provide health coverage for 10 million children each year." Dionne further pointed out that this is "not a comparison the administration relishes."

Democrats will seek to minimize the disputed $22 billion by contrasting it to both the monthly cost of the Iraq War and the $610 billion in overall costs for military operations since 9/11. We will be reminded that a recent government report found $6 billion in contract fraud in Iraq. The president's congressional allies, who now hope to force Democrats to defend their wasteful ways, will instead be defending the war in Iraq—again.

> Anyone searching for a firm Republican commitment to fiscal restraint will search in vain.

And the necessity of funding the war provides Democrats with an opportunity to force concessions on federal spending. Earlier this year, Democrats attached extra domestic spending and an increase in the minimum wage along with a troop-withdrawal timeline to the president's supplemental request for Iraq funding. Opposing both the spending increases and the withdrawal date, Bush vetoed the bill. The withdrawal date alone was removed, and the bill was signed. The price for getting the necessary funds for Iraq was $17 billion in additional spending for Democratic priorities.

The administration is now seeking $42 billion in supplemental funding for the war, and assures supporters it has no intention of repeating the accommodation on excessive spending. In a veto fight over the supplemental funding, President Bush will argue that Congress is holding vital resources for the troops hostage to wasteful pork-barrel spending. Here the president will have the advantage of being the more credible champion of providing the necessary support to the troops in Iraq, but also the disadvantage of sounding an unfamiliar alarm (over spending).

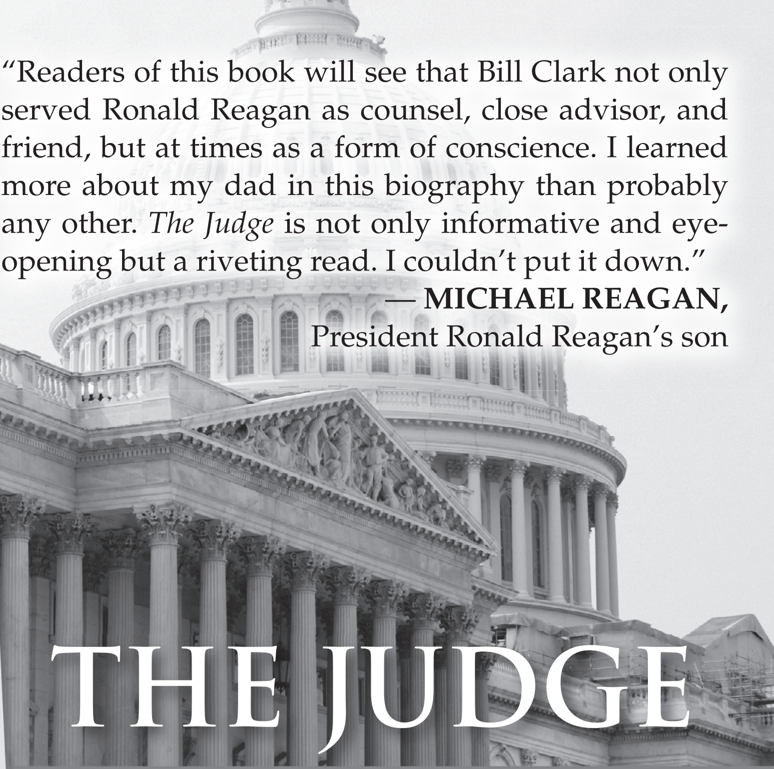
The fact that Congress's wasteful ways demonstrably cross party lines will also make it difficult to demonstrate a sharp distinction between Democrats and Republicans on the issue. Following the uproar over Alaska senator Ted Stevens's infamous "Bridge to Nowhere," committed budget reformers forced some transparency on the self-serving practice of earmarking billions in federal spending. It is now transparent that plenty of other Republicans are at the federal trough to win favor back home.

The Senate recently approved a transportation bill that included $2 billion in pet projects. Coupled with legislative projects from a separate highway bill, total spending on transportation earmarks next year will be over $8 billion. The Democratic Congress is merely continuing a tradition. Republican control of Congress saw an explosion in the number of transportation earmarks, which increased by over 1,000 percent between 1996 and 2005.

Following the collapse of the bridge in Minneapolis in August, Sen. Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) called for the Senate to put a temporary moratorium on transportation pork until all structurally deficient bridges were repaired. The amendment failed 82 to 14. When Coburn spotted millions set aside for bike paths in states with a significant number of deficient bridges, he offered an amendment to prohibit the federal funding of bike paths. The amendment failed 80 to 18. There is an overwhelming, bipartisan Senate majority in favor of politicians' pork.

Under new rules, earmark sponsors must attach their names to their pet projects, and these details are available in a searchable data bank. Anyone searching for a firm Republican commitment to fiscal restraint will search in vain.

Frustrated conservatives are eager to engage a Democratic Congress in a war over spending that will allow Republicans to reclaim the mantle of fiscal responsibility. But a real war and allies who have abandoned the cause of fiscal responsibility make for an uphill fight. **NR**



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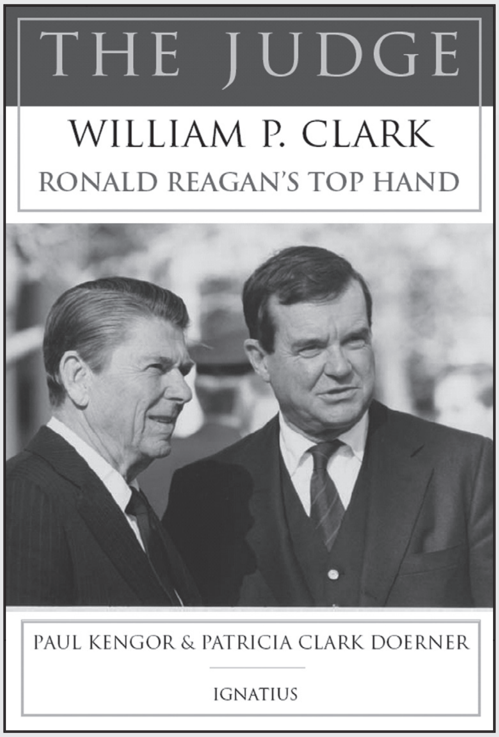

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POLITICS

Asia Fundraising-Gate, Part II

Just when you thought you'd never hear the word 'Lippo' again . . .

BYRON YORK

IN the summer of 1996, the Democratic National Committee released its quarterly campaign-finance report, and two names, Arief and Soraya Wiriadinata, quickly caught reporters' attention. Nobody had ever heard of them. They lived modestly in a townhouse in Springfield, Va., yet with contributions of $425,000 to the party and President Bill Clinton, the Wiriadinatas out-gave such well-known Democrats as Steven Spielberg. It turned out they had given their money through a Democratic fundraiser named John Huang, who was in tight with the Clintons as well as the Indonesian business conglomerate Lippo Group, which was funneling illegal money to the president's reelection campaign. When investigators started looking into that, the campaign-finance scandal was born.

Fast forward to 2007. In late August, the *Wall Street Journal*, checking campaign-finance reports, noticed contributions from William and Alice Paw, two members of a middle-class family living in a modest home in Daly City, Calif. Like the Wiriadinatas, they had never been heard of; William Paw, according to the paper, is a postal worker who makes about $49,000 a year, while Alice Paw does not work. Yet the couple, along with their adult children, combined to give $45,000 to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton in the last two years, and a total of $200,000 to Democrats. It turns out their contributions were made in coordination with a Democratic fundraiser—and fugitive from the law—named Norman Hsu, and another campaign-finance scandal was born.

Yes, it is happening again. In political circles, the case of Norman Hsu is bringing back memories of scandals past. "It's the modus operandi of the Clintons," says Republican representative Dan Burton, who spent much of the 1990s investigating Democratic fundraising. "When Bill Clinton's poll numbers were down and they thought he might not be reelected, they pulled every stunt in the book to raise money. President Clinton got well over $1 million from the Lippo group."

This isn't quite the same thing—these days, Hillary Clinton's numbers are most definitely up and there's no Lippo involved, at least not yet—but the Hsu case has raised lots of questions about the way the Clinton campaign operates. Questions like: Did they really not know who Norman Hsu was?

Hsu has had a criminal record for quite some time. In 1992, he pleaded no contest to charges stemming from a fraudulent import business. He fled before he could be sentenced, remaining on the lam until his capture this year. In recent times, according to federal prosecutors, Hsu ran a "classic Ponzi scheme," creating a company called Components, Ltd., which he said provided financing to other companies. According to prosecutors, he enticed investors with promises of quick returns, paying off older investors with money he got from newer investors.

Some of his stash went to Senator Clinton and other Democrats, in the form of contributions made by Hsu himself and of those he pressured his investors to make. "Hsu made implied threats to the victims leading them to believe that their failure to make the required political contributions would adversely affect the victims' ongoing investment relationship with Hsu," prosecutors say in the Hsu indictment. The money, in turn, got Hsu invited to big Clinton and Democratic-party events. Raising money for Democrats was an integral part of his business; on September 6, when Hsu was arrested, he was carrying a suitcase with cash, checkbooks for the Ponzi scheme, and, according to the indictment, "hand-written ledgers reflecting specific amounts of campaign contributions to be made by specific victims on behalf of various candidates for federal office."

When the story of the Paw family first broke in the *Journal*, Clinton spokesman Howard Wolfson vouched for Hsu's char-

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Professor Amy-Jill Levine (Ph.D., Duke University) is E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, where she also holds the position of Director of the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality. She is a prodigious scholar, author, and lecturer.

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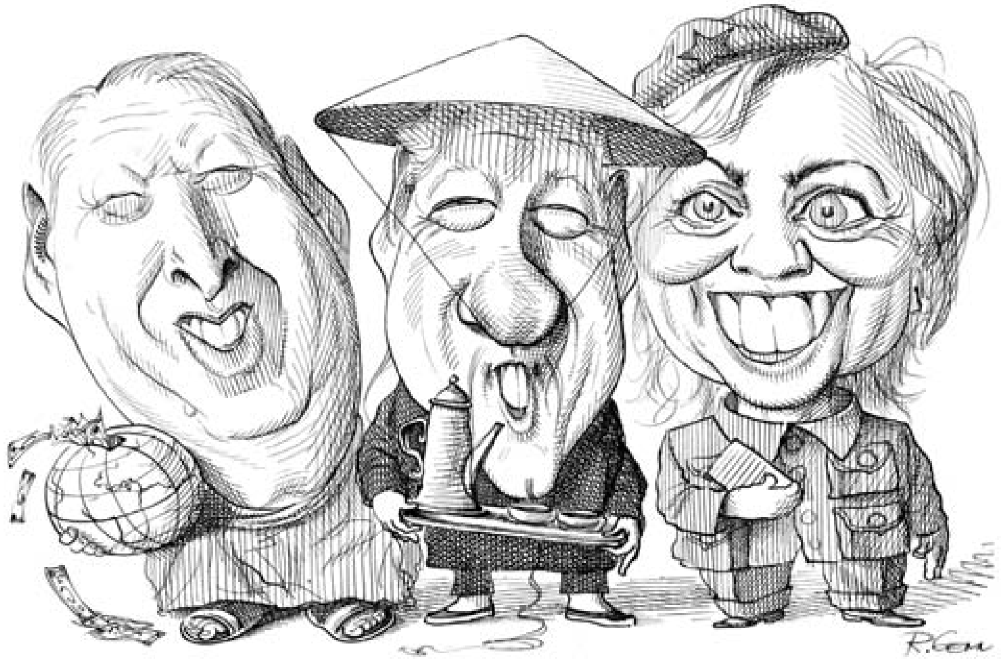
acter, telling the paper, “During Mr. Hsu’s many years of active participation in the political process, there has been no question about his integrity or his commitment to playing by the rules, and we have absolutely no reason to call his contributions into question.” But in no time at all, as Hsu’s record became public, the campaign changed course. Senator Clinton gave to charity the $23,000 that Hsu had contributed to her campaign, and later returned $850,000 to donors who had given money through Hsu.

Meanwhile, she pleaded ignorance of the whole thing. “Unfortunately none of us caught the problems that were there,” she told CNN. “This happened to a lot of campaigns, a lot of investors who made investments that unfortunately don’t look like they were treated appropriately. The system of justice will work its course, and I think that’s appropriate.”

As she faces questions, Mrs. Clinton has clearly learned a few things from her experiences in the 1990s. Back then, when Bill Clinton was faced with allegations of conduit contributions and other violations of the campaign-finance laws, he argued that the scandal just proved the need for campaign-finance reform. “The real problem is these campaigns cost too much money, they take too much time, and they will continue to do so until we pass campaign-finance reform,” he told reporters in March 1997. “If we pass campaign-finance reform . . . then the situation will get better.”

Now, with scandal dogging her own campaign, Senator Clinton is trying the same approach. Of course, we now have campaign-finance reform, so she says the scandal demonstrates the need for *more* campaign-finance reform. “The real answer here is public financing,” she said on NBC’s *Meet the Press* September 23. “[It] is the only way to really change a lot of the problems that we have in our campaign-finance system.”



For an updated story, an updated illustration: NATIONAL REVIEW*’s Roman Genn reprises his most notorious artwork ever, from March 1997.*

Reform aside, the question now is whether we will see a truly comprehensive investigation into the matter. Hsu is facing federal charges for the alleged Ponzi scheme, and federal prosecutors are pursuing leads in the case, but so far the Hsu scandal has not set off the kind of investigative frenzy that we have seen in years past. That would have to come from Capitol Hill, but with Democrats in charge, it’s unlikely that there will be any great interest.

“Are you kidding me?” Burton laughs when asked whether the Democratic chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Rep. Henry Waxman, might open an investigation. “No, no, no. He’s a tough guy. He’s going to protect Hillary Clinton and the Democrat party.”

“If Norman Hsu were a Bush Ranger,” adds a former congressional investigator, “Democrats would be screaming that George W. Bush should be investigated, and there should be a special counsel. Right now, we would be hearing screams from the Senate.” But all is quiet.

And at the moment, it is not clear whether this case will lead to further revelations, as happened in 1996 when Burton pursued Huang, Charlie Trie, Johnny Chung, and others. “It was a major scandal,” Burton recalls. “We sent five criminal referrals to the Justice Department, we had over 100 people either take the Fifth Amendment or leave the country, we had an epidemic of memory loss at the White House.”

But in the end, nothing much came of it. Even though Burton’s committee uncovered solid evidence that the Clinton reelection campaign knew about the illegal contributions, then–attorney general Janet Reno took no action on his work. In the process, Burton was excoriated in the press. If the experience showed anything, it was that investigating campaign-finance scandals is not a great career move. This time around, there doesn’t seem to be anyone who’s ready to step into Burton’s shoes. **NR**

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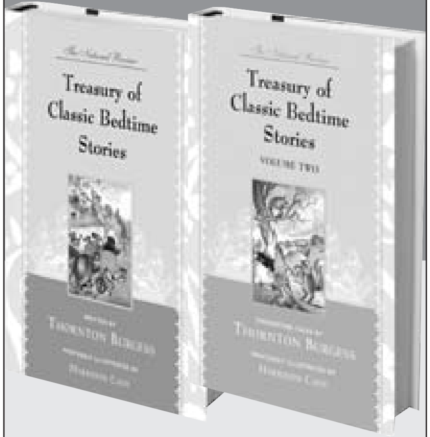

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ASIA

A Beautiful, Nasty Country

The long-running woes of Burma

ANTHONY DANIELS

THERE are few countries in the world more charming than Burma; there are few countries in the world that have been consistently worse governed. Whether these two facts are connected in any causal way I will leave political scientists and philosophers to decide.

There is, of course, nothing whatever to be said in favor of the military rulers of Burma. Judged by almost any conceivable standard, they have ruined their beautiful and richly endowed country. They have impoverished and looted it, and suppressed every last vestige of freedom. They have profiteered from the longest-running civil wars in the world, unable or unwilling to end the conflicts that are the raison d'être of the huge but ragged army that they control, and that are therefore the ultimate source of their seemingly perpetual hold on power.

Medical services are appalling, and a very high percentage of the most educated Burmese, industrious and intelligent, leave the country as soon as they are able. The austerity that the military rulers have consistently demanded of their subjects has been matched only by their taste for the vulgar high life. It is said that the daughter of Than Shwe, the head of the junta, was weighed down with diamonds at her wedding, a video of part of which is available on the Internet.

Prominent members of the military regime, powerful, rich, but relatively uneducated, are said to build Buddhist stupas for themselves at Pagan, the famous capital of the first Burmese empire, which was overthrown by Genghis Khan. Hundreds and hundreds of medieval temples dot the plain; the new additions thus imply that the junta is a continuation of Burmese tradition and culture.

The army has been in power for 45 years, ever since Ne Win's coup of 1962. Caprice and contempt for the wishes of the people marked his regime from the very beginning. For example, Ne Win (like many Burmese, and like Sir Isaac Newton) was a devotee of numerology, the art—or science, as devotees no doubt think it—of divining meaning from numbers. In 1963, Ne Win suppressed the 50- and 100-kyat notes without compensating those who held them, and substituted some of the oddest denominations in the world: 15-, 35-, 45-, 75-, and 90-kyat notes, the penultimate also suppressed a little later, inflicting further misfortune upon the people of Burma. (By their denominations shall ye know them: Albania, Cuba, and the Soviet Union shared a taste for the denomination of their currency in notes of 3—lek, pesos, and rubles respectively.)

Apparently, Ne Win believed that if he got the denominations of the notes right, he would live to be 90. His theory turned out to be true: He lived until he was 91, dying in 2002.

The current rulers have not only renamed the whole country and the largest city Myanmar and Yangon respectively, but removed the capital to a place called Nay Pyi Daw (Place of the King), which, like most artificial capitals, is utterly forlorn, built in the style favored by the late Nicolae Ceausescu in his "systematizing" stage. Here bureaucrats are housed in identical modern blocks, jerry-built and destined to rot and molder after only a very short period of use. The only reason given for the removal of the capital from Rangoon has been that Rangoon is susceptible to foreign sea-borne invasion.

Extreme xenophobia has long been one of the most salient characteristics of military rule in Burma. Ne Win virtually closed the country to foreigners, under the pretext of following the Burmese path to socialism. The only party permitted was Burma Socialist Programme, Ne

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Mr. Daniels is the author of *Utopias Elsewhere* and other books.

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Win's own. At first after his coup foreigners were allowed into the country for only 24 to 72 hours at a time, though this was later extended to a whole week. Foreign investment was discouraged, and while Ne Win himself went to London or Switzerland for medical treatment, and had some of the characteristics of a playboy, the official line was that the country should be autarkic, that is to say that it should produce and provide everything for itself. This autarky was less extreme than that of, say, North Korea, Cambodia, China, or even Paraguay under its first dictator, José Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia, but it was sufficient to keep Burma isolated from the rest of the world. Burma was for long the only country on earth where the cars were even older than those in Cuba. When Ne Win took over, it was the largest exporter of rice in the world; soon it could barely feed itself.

Ne Win and his government ascribed this poverty to the anti-Burmese machinations of foreigners and imperialists, but in 1988 unrest was so widespread that this was no longer even remotely plausible. Under pressure of demonstrations, a coup was organized, widely believed to have been orchestrated by Ne Win himself: At any rate, he remained the éminence grise of the new military rulers until 1998.

The army, known as the Tatmadaw, restored order by killing up to 3,000 demonstrators, but at first the new regime appeared liberal by comparison with Ne Win, despite its sinister acronym, SLORC, the State Law and Order Restoration Council. It opened the country up to foreign investment, the members of the government of course benefiting personally from this. It even allowed elections in 1990, but when it did not like the results it annulled them, following the model of the Algerian military regime after the inconvenient vote it had allowed. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won 59 percent of the Burmese popular vote and 80 percent of the seats in the assembly. A vote was one thing, but power was another: and in Burma, power still grew out of the barrel of a gun. Fundamentally, not much had changed.

The contemporary story of Burma, then, is that of the prolonged triumph of evil: of quite unnecessary poverty, of unbridled corruption, of terrible backwardness despite advantages such as vast natural resources and intelligent people to exploit them, and above all of ruthless political tyranny.

And yet disturbing questions raise themselves in my mind. Aung San, who negotiated independence from Britain, and was Aung San Suu Kyi's father, was assassinated along with six of his close associates even before independence; uprisings occurred in the army and among non-Burmese ethnic groups immediately on independence. The parliamentary regime was not only fractured but ineffectual and corrupt. If countries don't necessarily get the governments they deserve (who can deserve a government as bad as Burma's?), neither can such governments be said to grow out of completely alien soil. Nor will the problems of ethnic diversity and antagonism in Burma be easily resolved.

KEYSTONE/GETTY HULTON ARCHIVE

Burmese strongman Ne Win in 1958

Why should we worry about Burma? If we are merely self-interested, we shouldn't worry much. It is not a serious threat to any of its neighbors, much less to the rest of the world, and the high-mindedness of Western leaders is not always completely credible or convincing. Chevron continues to operate in Burma, and when President Sarkozy called for further sanctions it was noticeable that he did not suggest the withdrawal of the French oil company, Total, from the country. Such Western economic sanctions as have been imposed have operated to increase the influence of the Chinese in Burma.

The Chinese have been only too delighted to step into the breach and are already by far Burma's largest customer and principal patron. They will not want to see Burma slide into chaos, any more than they will want a flourishing democracy that has been brought about by demonstrations and popular action, indeed a democracy of any kind, on their doorstep.

Here I have a personal confession of a completely discreditable nature. I loved Burma under Ne Win, instead of hating it as I know I ought to have done. I recognize that it was deeply oppressive and impoverished, and yet it had a seductive charm that derived precisely from the preservation of its distinctiveness. It had been spared the choking traffic, constant scurry, and intense commercialization of the countries of Southeast Asia. Everything was run-down and close to ruins, but as every aesthete knows ruins have charms that new office blocks or elevated highways do not necessarily have. People had very little in the way of material goods, but they seemed to have time and the dignity that time confers upon action. I did not look forward to a world in which there were no Burmas, only Singapores, and I was far from alone in my reaction. Very few people who went to Burma developed any moral fervor about changing it for the better.

I know that this was a highly improper response, that it was placing casual preferences above the wishes of millions of Burmese, to say nothing of its disregard of the cruelties inflicted upon opponents of the regime. Like most people, the Burmese want to be rich and free, and my aesthetic reservations were not so much as dust in the balance. Yet the history of Burma in the last three quarters of a century also gives rational grounds for doubt. Hope springs eternal, of course, but so does disappointment. **NR**

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EUROPE

As Belgium Goes . . .

. . . so goes Europe?

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

BELGIUM has been without a government since elections were held as long ago as June 10, and it looks like it will be without one for the indefinite future. Lucky little Belgium, you might think, to obtain a respite from the flagrant scandals of corruption washing through its ruling circles these many years.

More than just the local issue of a small country, here is a portent of the European future. Belgium is a microcosm of—actually the model for—the European Union, and its capital, Brussels, is the European capital as well. Committees of politicians and their advisers have been busy over many years playing around with the fates of European peoples and countries, imposing the new identity of Europe as they see fit. Ethnicity and self-determination time and again prove strong enough to bring about the collapse of theoretical unitary projects. These are the very forces paralyzing Belgium today, pulling the country apart, and they are gathering one day to do the same on the much larger scale of the EU.

The British invented Belgium back in 1830. For what must then have seemed sensible imperial reasons, the British bundled the Dutch-speaking and Protestant Flemings in the province of Flanders with the very different French-speaking and Catholic Walloons in the neighboring province of Wallonia. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, the French resented this dispensation for Wallonia, but could do nothing about it. Instead they consoled themselves by mocking the whole experiment. Their kith and kin in Belgium were depicted as boring, provincial. Charles Baudelaire, the great poet and master of spleen, may well be the original source of this stereotyping. When Belgium was still relatively new, he spent time there and did not enjoy it. He left an outline for a travel book about Belgium which is as offensive as it is entertaining, and would be quite unpublishable in the present climate if it were not an established classic. He also wrote disobliging poems about Belgium, including a four-line epitaph anticipating the country's death, with a trumpet-blast of a conclusion: "Enfin!"—"At last!" Nevertheless, defense of Belgian integrity was an Allied aim in World War I.

There are now 6 million Flemings, 3.5 million Walloons, and a further 1 million—mostly francophone—in Brussels, the only place with any significant mixed population. (To go into Dutch-speaking shops and ask for something in French, as I once did thoughtlessly in Tervuren, a district of Brussels, is to discover what ostracism really means.) For reasons of language and religion and culture, the two components have always been incompatible, and the political structure devised to accommodate them is unbelievably complex, a fine tribute to lawyers.

ETIENNE CARJAT/GETTY HULTON ARCHIVE

Charles Baudelaire: not a great admirer of Belgium

The country is a constitutional monarchy, and has an unelected Crown Council whose role is advisory; it is also a federation with a federal parliament in which no fewer than eleven parties are represented; and it has in addition eight regional or language-based parliaments, and relatively independent local councils. On account of the ethnic divide, there are no national parties, but only regional parties, with proportional representation on top of that. Mainstream Christian Democrats and Liberals in Flanders, for instance, are separate and distinct from mainstream Christian Democrats and Liberals in Wallonia. Government in the national parliament has to be a matter of coalition, and the consequent horse-trading is a prime source of the corruption that corrodes the country. It is said that Belgium has a larger political class than the United States.

These arrangements were designed to combine unity and fairness, but the real world of national characteristics and mutual perceptions and rivalries has long since overwhelmed any idealism. Flemings tend to be conservative, free-market-oriented, individualistic, while in contrast Walloons are socialist and collective-minded. Unemployment in Wallonia is almost double what it is in Flanders. Flemings see themselves as go-getters, and complain that they are obliged to subsidize undeserving free-loaders—they are 60 percent of the population but generate 70 percent of the national wealth which is then spent disproportionately in Wallonia. Not surprisingly, Walloons block proposed reforms that might diminish their social benefits. Paul Belien, a Fleming and an acknowledged expert in these intricacies, says that "what began as a language issue has turned into an economic issue"—which is of course a political issue too. The Flemish nationalist party, Vlaams Belang, proposes to cut through grievances by declaring Flanders an independent sovereign state. Polls show that almost half the Flemings are in favor.

The current deadlock has its origins in a 2003 ruling of the Belgian Constitutional Court that the constituency of Brussels and the surrounding area was unfair to Flemings and ought to be recast into two constituencies, one Flemish and the other bilingual. For four years, the Walloon politicians, led by Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, a Liberal, refused to approve or implement the ruling. In the June elections, the Liberals were duly humiliated.

Yves Leterme, a Christian Democrat

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"I can't find adequate words to describe my appreciation of your work in providing *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. You had to do an enormous amount of research to bring this vast and most important knowledge to your readers.

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and minister-president in Flanders, received more votes than any other politician. In theory, his Walloon father and Flemish mother ought to provide a parentage qualifying him for the job of national prime minister. But last year he put his foot in it, saying, “Apparently the francophones are not conditioned intellectually to learn Dutch.” (Such insults are common coinage. A Walloon politician and one of the supposed “wise men” of the Crown Council, Herman de Croo, has simply reversed it, sneering, “Flemish nationalists are mentally handicapped.”) Leterme had also once dismissed Belgium as “an accident of history,” and declared with even more painful truth that “Belgians have nothing in common apart from the king, the football team and some beers.” Asked to sing the national anthem, he launched into the *Marseillaise*—which appears to have made French-speakers assume he was laughing at them. Electoral success notwithstanding, Leterme has been unable to form a coalition, and returned his mandate to the king.

King Albert, an experienced monarch at the age of 73, called the Crown Council but it too has been unable to find any politician capable of forming a governing coalition. One more push, as Vlaams Belang sees it, and there will be an independent state of Flanders. That would leave Wallonia out in the cold, without resources for independence. The greater part of it might choose to become French territory, with a lesser part populated by German speakers adhering to Luxembourg. A columnist in the French newspaper *Figaro* advises President Sarkozy to annex Wallonia in the way that West Germany simply took over East Germany. In the event of breakup, Brussels and its surrounding district, nominally the governing heart of the European Union, would at best mimic Washington, D.C., and at worst become what the international lawyers call a *corpus separatum*, meaning that nobody knows how to resolve the status of said body.

Louis Michel, a veteran Walloon cabinet minister as well as a European Union commissioner, believes in playing for time: “We’ve seen worse. The situation is not so dramatic as to suggest we will not find a solution.” Maybe so: Twenty years ago, for exactly the same reasons, Belgium set a record by lasting 148 days without a government. Paul Belien believes that breakup is inevitable in the fairly short term, but he makes the point that nobody shows signs of turning violent. Adding to an undoubted dimension of operetta, he also quips that it is too much to hope to see Congolese peacekeepers on the streets of Brussels.

Like Belgium, the EU is designed to provide an overarching political structure reconciling the contrasting and sometimes incompatible features of its component national entities, now numbering 27, all without even a king, a football team, or beers in common. As though this were a practical process free from illusion about human nature, a steady flow of constitutional treaties is obliging every EU country to surrender sovereignty piecemeal. The cumulative effect is to galvanize everywhere a backlash of nationalists—in majorities as in minorities—determined to express their historic identity. The contradiction between centralization and regionalism is insoluble, and Belgium is a perfect prototype of how destructively it plays out. A prominent intellectual, Vincent de Roeck, the secretary of the Ludwig von Mises Institute and a libertarian, has brought Baudelaire’s epitaph up to date by accusing the EU and its institutions of “having dug Belgium’s grave.”

In the wake of the Flemings and Walloons come other European ethnicities historically at odds with the neighbors and long denied independence as a result—Scots, Catalans, Basques, Corsicans, Welsh, Lombards, Burgundians, Slovaks, and others, not to mention Albanians, Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, and Macedonians. As their countries lose sovereignty, all such minorities are encouraged to assert their identity through independence and statehood. The majorities hitherto accommodating them then resent having to pay for these apparently ungrateful and selfish groups, and become ready and willing for a parting of the ways. All of them together are capable of digging the graves of even the most firmly established countries. Peoples of different languages, religion, and culture in the end defy committees of politicians who have fanciful plans to amalgamate them. Belgium’s crisis today is the EU’s crisis tomorrow. **NR**

■ CULTURE WATCH

Right-leaning Celebrity Alert!

Watch the comedian Drew Carey

JOHN J. MILLER

On the September 18 broadcast of *Power of 10*, a new game show on CBS, host Drew Carey asked contestant D. J. Burgduff this question: What percentage of Americans are willing to pay higher taxes for the government to provide universal health care? While Burgduff thought it over, Carey performed a comic riff: “Personally, I can’t wait for universal health care.” Then, in a mocking voice: “From the folks that brought you FEMA, the TSA, the DMV, the IRS, comes universal health care! It’s going to be fantastic, to have the government in charge of our health!”

Nobody who watched the program could have mistaken Carey’s opinion of socialized medicine: He thinks it’s a stupendously bad idea. Yet *Power of 10* isn’t a talking-heads program on a cable channel—it’s a quiz show on a mainstream network with millions of viewers. Carey nevertheless has turned it into an occasional platform for his right-of-center libertarianism. It’s not his only platform. On October 15, when Carey succeeds Bob Barker as host of *The Price Is Right*, the Reason Foundation, a libertarian think tank in Los Angeles, will debut the first in a series of public-policy videos starring Carey. At the end of the month, Carey will attend his first meeting as a member of Reason’s board of trustees. Following years of success in stand-up comedy and on sitcoms, Carey is on the brink of becoming one of the Right’s most visible celebrities.

The 49-year-old Carey was born and raised in Cleveland, and joined the Marine Corps after attending Kent State.

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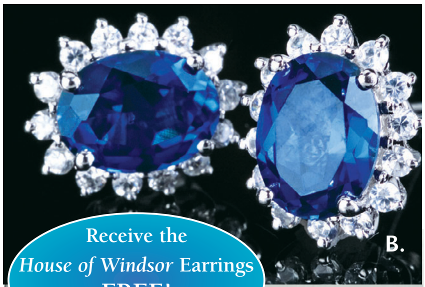

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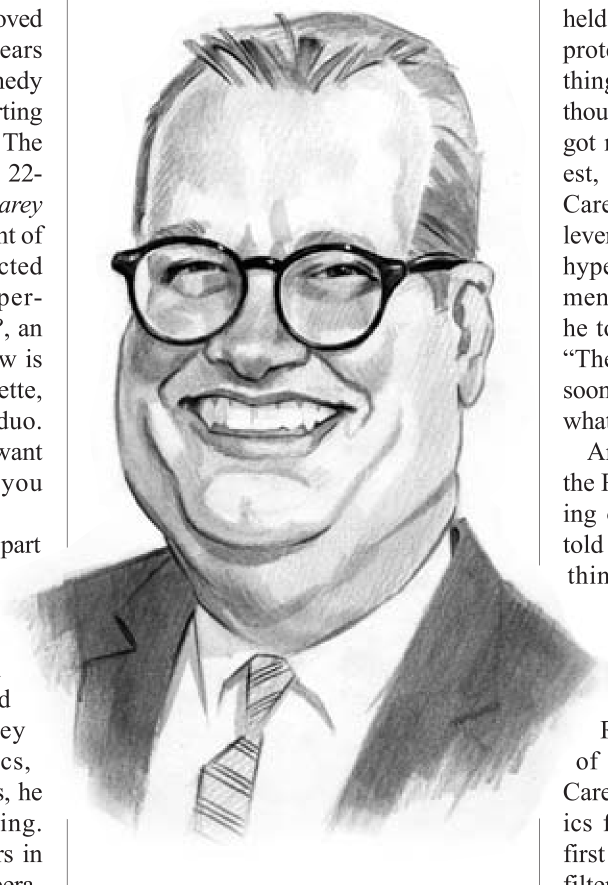
He credits his time in the military with turning his life around: “The things I learned in the Marine Corps have stayed with me to this day,” he wrote in his 1997 book, *Dirty Jokes and Beer*. “I hate being late, I’m very organized, and I’m not afraid to take responsibility for my own actions.” The Marines left a visible impression on him as well: He kept his crew cut. Combined with his horn-rimmed glasses and suit-and-tie wardrobe, it gave him one of the most distinctive looks in comedy. He’s like an anti-hippy.

Carey caught his big break in 1991, when he performed a six-minute routine on *The Tonight Show*. Johnny Carson loved it and Carey was launched. Two years later, he starred in a Showtime comedy special. After that, he earned a supporting role in a short-lived NBC program. The experience taught him the art of the 22-minute sitcom. In 1995, *The Drew Carey Show* premiered on ABC. At the height of its nine-year run, the program attracted 17 million viewers. Carey also performed in *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, an improvisational comedy show. “Drew is a really sweet guy,” says Penn Jillette, part of the Penn & Teller comic duo. “He’s the kind of person you would want to sit next to on a plane, even if you didn’t know him.”

Political humor was never a central part of Carey’s act—if it had been, he might not have had his chance at fame. “A lot of the gatekeepers in show business are liberal,” says Tim Slagle, a comedian who has performed at conservative confabs. Yet Carey didn’t steer totally clear of politics, either. As far back as the early 1990s, he cracked jokes about global warming. Having suffered through long winters in Cleveland, he didn’t think hotter temperatures were necessarily a bad thing. He also lampooned the Hard Rock Cafe’s do-gooder slogan, “Save the Planet.” In the pilot episode of his sitcom, Carey’s character denounced a nosy bar patron as a “safety Nazi.”

His book includes plenty of the lewd content for which he is well-known—Carey is no social conservative—as well as a fair amount of political material. His targets are bipartisan, though it’s obvious that he enjoys telling Kennedy jokes. Carey’s critique of Bill Clinton could warm the heart of any free-market wonk: “You even sent your daughter to an exclusive private rich-kid school. Nice going, especially since you’re so vigorously opposed to school vouchers which would let the average Joe provide the same opportunities to his daughter that you gave to yours.”

Carey’s appreciation for military culture shines through, too, especially when he mounts a politically incorrect defense of the Navy over the Tailhook sex-harassment scandal: “I don’t want a navy full of fighter pilots who’ve been to a sensitivity seminar. I want mad-dog, rabid killers going to battle for me and mine.” In 2003, Carey led a team of comedians to Iraq to entertain U.S. soldiers. “We just came here to tell you that we appreciate you and that we support you completely,” he said from a stage in front of what had been Saddam Hussein’s palace in Tikrit.



Drew Carey

DARREN GYGI

During the second season of *The Drew Carey Show*, *Reason* magazine invited subscribers in the Los Angeles area to attend a meet-the-editors mixer. Carey showed up. “Before Drew, says editor Nick Gillespie, “I think the biggest celebrity we’d seen was Curtis Armstrong, the guy who played Booger in *Revenge of the Nerds*.”

Before long, Carey fell into the Reason Foundation’s orbit. He sat down for a Q&A with the magazine. “You should never depend on the government for your retirement, your financial security, for anything. If you do, you’re screwed,” he said in the interview. He wore a *Reason* T-shirt on his sitcom. When *Reason* senior editor Jacob Sullum’s anti-anti-smoking book *For Your Own Good* came out, Carey proposed a publicity stunt: They held a “smoke-in” at a local restaurant to protest anti-smoking laws. “The whole thing was his idea,” says Sullum. “We thought it would get local attention, but it got national attention.” The public interest, of course, came from the fact that Carey, a non-smoker, was willing to leverage his fame to score a point against hyper-regulationist ordinances. “Sacramento shouldn’t tell you what to do,” he told a *Los Angeles Times* columnist. “They think they’re your nanny. Pretty soon they’ll be telling you how to dress, what time to be in bed.”

Around a year ago, Carey approached the Reason Foundation about collaborating on a video-journalism project. “He told us that he wanted to do the kind of thing Michael Moore was doing, but about freedom,” says David Nott, Reason’s president. “It took us about two seconds to decide to collaborate.” The result is Reason.tv, which will feature a series of ten-minute documentaries starring Carey. They focus on public-policy topics from a libertarian perspective. The first episode looks at traffic congestion, filtering the proposals of Reason transportation guru Robert Poole through Carey’s populism. Future topics will include eminent-domain abuse, medical marijuana, and charter schools. Reason has raised funds to record about two dozen. Carey takes no fee and has personally invested in the project. “I hope through my gift of argument to influence policy decisions,” he said in a Time.com podcast in August.

Carey has shied away from overt partisanship, seeming more comfortable with ideas than candidates. Yet he’s been a longtime supporter of George Voinovich, the Republican senator from Carey's native Ohio. "When I was running for reelection in 2004, he did an event for me—one of the most successful fundraisers I've ever held," says Voinovich, whose daughter is a California screenwriter. Shortly before the 2000 elections, Carey appeared on Fox News and railed against Democrats. "Every time somebody's successful, the Democrats want to demonize you," he said. "If you want to make money, you want to get rich, you want to get ahead, all of a sudden you're a demon, you're a devil." He complained about death taxes ("I just don't think it's fair"), the old luxury tax ("blue-collar guys all got put out of work"), and the war on poverty ("how long has [it] been going on?"). He also took aim at Hillary Clinton: "It doesn't take a village to raise a child," he insisted.

On *Power of 10*, Carey is much more subtle. It's a game show in the new style, with exuberant guests, pulsating music, audience participation, and the potential for big-money prizes. Questions are based on surveys, and contestants have to guess at everything from what percentage of women have changed a flat tire (50 percent) to what percentage of Americans are afraid of circus clowns (9 percent). They win rounds by coming within a certain range of the correct answer. Carey doesn't know the answers until they're revealed to everybody, and he often tries to help guests. On the August 22 show, he asked Julie Foehr what percentage thinks there should be a mandatory cut-off age for elderly drivers. As Foehr mulled it over, Carey commented: "So far on our show, the polls show that Americans don't like the government telling them what to do, even if it's good for them, even it if makes sense. They don't like the government butting in." A moment later, Foehr guessed that between 62 to 72 percent supported a cut-off age. She should have listened closer to Carey: The answer was 38 percent, and she was booted from the program.

Carey may yet nudge public opinion on a variety of topics in a conservative or libertarian direction.

Since *Power of 10* started in August, Carey has made wisecracks about the IRS, feminists, and gun control. From this unexpected perch, he may yet nudge public opinion on a variety of topics in a conservative or libertarian direction. But he clearly has a lot of work to do. Remember that September 18 question to D. J. Burgduff about how many Americans would pay higher taxes for universal health care? The answer was 51 percent.

Sounds like a good subject for Carey to tackle on Reason.tv. **NR**

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COVER STORY

The Freest Black Man in America

Clarence Thomas, associate justice from Pin Point, Ga.

SHELBY STEELE

To be born into a minority group is, among other things, to be born into a collective experience of insecurity. Put differently, it is to be born into a group of nervous people. If you are born black in America, as has been my own fate, then you are born into a particularly intense insecurity. Your people have known almost nothing but insecurity and impotence for centuries—this as opposed to the majority culture's experience of itself as heroic and world-beating; ingenious in peace, dominant in war.

One thing this means for minorities is that their group identity will often be the enemy of their individuality. In its insecurity, the group is naturally threatened by the impulse in some of its members to think for themselves. Individuals like this seem to put the group at risk. What will we do if the majority culture thinks you speak for us? Your indulgence in individuality jeopardizes the carefully constructed mask we present to the powerful majority. Your individuality collaborates with them. So knock it off. Get in line, or we will shun you to the point of extinction.

Moreover, only blacks who wear the group's mask can pronounce on the innocence of whites. Thus Don Imus, longing for absolution, sought an audience with Al Sharpton. Ward Connerly or Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice—individuals all—would never do. People who veer from the group mask—who evolve by their own lights—start to lose their moral authority *as blacks*. This is why President Bush got no credit for having two black secretaries of state. Naively he selected two black individuals.

Still, the black individual is now emerging as something of a new archetype in American life—not someone who disowns his group but someone who rejects it as a master. Today there is no more quintessential embodiment of this new archetype than Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas. And now—in his new memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*—Justice Thomas offers up the rich details of his remarkable and often heroic struggle to become a man who simply thinks for himself. He says, "The question was how much courage I could muster up to express my individuality. What I wanted was for everyone—the government, the racists, the activists, the students, even Daddy—to leave me alone so that I could finally start thinking for myself."

This memoir is really two books in one. The first chronicles his struggle to become his own man; the second describes the persecution this achievement elicits. A line he quotes from Ralph Ellison points to the cause-and-effect connection between these two books: "I was never more hated than when I tried to be honest."

Because this first book is a story of overcoming it calls to mind those great inspiring autobiographies of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Richard Wright. But Thomas's overcoming is a more existential struggle than the struggles of these other men. Like them he contends with racism, especially in his early life, but unlike them he wants something more than just a victory over racism. There are other forces—benign and malign—that threaten to take him over, and he struggles mightily to ward them off.

There was the radical black-power politics he encountered in college. There were the dreams that his powerful and controlling grandfather had for him (to be the first black priest in Savannah). There was the stigma that affirmative action left on his achievements at Yale Law School and the relentless paternalism of post-'60s liberalism that would have allowed him to lower his standards. And there was even the allure of money and security—"golden handcuffs"—when he worked briefly as a corporate lawyer.

So *My Grandfather's Son* is a more radical memoir than its forebears, because it envisions an almost heroic individualism—an individualism that is quite beyond the old framework of race. Thomas mentions in passing that he listens to country music. "Merely because I was black, it seemed, I was supposed to listen

---

Mr. Steele is a fellow at the Hoover Institution. His most recent book is *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era.*

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction, instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 150,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? About 1.2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for almost sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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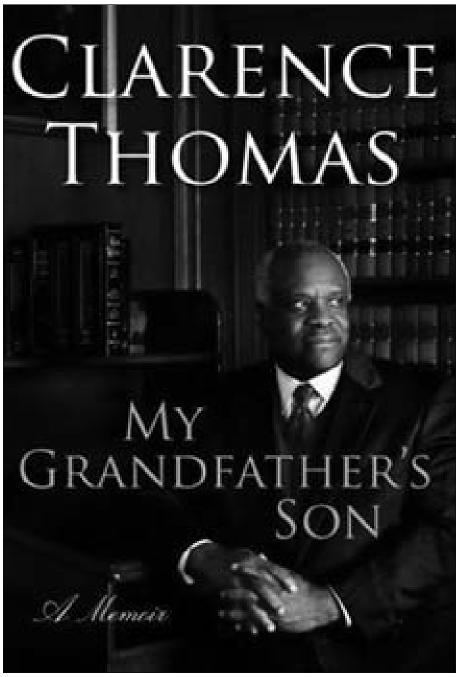
to Hugh Masekela instead of Carole King, just as I was expected to be a radical, not a conservative.” This book stands for what might be called a *non-binding racial identity*—an open-minded black identity that informs but never constrains. This is what Thomas demands for himself and holds out for other blacks—this in an age of identity politics when the black identity is so closed-minded and narrowly defined that it requires a reflexive devotion to the Democratic party.



A DIFFERENT PRESUMPTION

The racial thinking that undergirds *My Grandfather's Son* makes it an original addition to those great black autobiographies of the past. It updates the black American experience by presuming freedom and opportunity more than racism. And, in the end, it is a lesson on how to live in freedom—a lesson that begins with a description of poverty on a par with Richard Wright's portrait of poverty in *Black Boy*.

However, Thomas first describes his very earliest years in Pin Point, Ga., as something of an idyll. The reader is made to understand that when poverty is rural and close to the ground—close to land and water—it can have a certain bountifulness and peace. But when Thomas is six, he and his younger brother are taken to Savannah to live in a broken-down tenement building with their overwhelmed young mother who has been abandoned by her husband. Here, all of a sudden, is rank urban poverty—despair, hunger, and abandonment. Thomas describes his hunger as a second-grader: “Never before had I known the nagging, chronic hunger that plagued me in Savannah. Hunger without the prospect of eating and cold without the prospect of warmth—that's how I remember the winter of 1955.” The nadir of this period in his life comes when he stumbles while carrying a chamber pot down stairs—there are no inside bathrooms—and finds himself drenched by its contents.

Thomas and his younger brother are saved from this Dickensian circumstance by the man whom Thomas describes simply as “the greatest man I have ever known”—their grandfather, Myers Anderson, who takes them in and raises them into adulthood. “Daddy,” as they come to call him, is an extraordinary man whose force of character animates this entire memoir and—as its title makes clear—accounts for the man that Clarence Thomas is today. Daddy—a man given to unceasing hard work who owns his own fuel-oil business—immediately subjects the two boys to a regime of sacrifice (no school sports, very little TV), self-development, and hard work that will serve them for the rest of their lives. Two boys who had seemed destined for lives of self-destruction and crime were transformed by a grandfather who showed his love through discipline.

Daddy's answer to the poverty and desolation of black Savannah is the unrelenting application of individual will. His was the classic American ethic of faith in God, delayed gratification, self-reliance, and individual initiative. And here we see the source of Justice Thomas's inbred conservatism. Even in college, though lending an ear to black radicalism, he rooms by himself in his senior year so that he can rise at three in the morning to study without disturbing a roommate. (He achieves almost every academic honor Holy Cross has to offer.) At Yale Law School he immediately takes the most difficult courses available in order to prove to himself that he is, in fact, competitive with his privileged white classmates.

If there is a romance in Clarence Thomas's life it is the thrill of starting at the bottom—a faith that makes every step forward a victory. This is the poor man's great excitement. Thus he is heartbroken when it becomes clear that Yale is practicing affirmative action. Outraged, he considers dropping out. Only the realization that he and his wife have a baby on the way keeps him at Yale. Yet, from then on he feels stigmatized by Yale's use of racial preferences. He also feels robbed of credit for his achievements there. And his bitterness only deepens when he realizes that the wider world also sees black graduates differently: Employers suspect that racial preferences, rather than talent, had won them the Yale imprimatur.

And here Thomas's life begins to touch on the absurd. He is a young man raised to fight the dehumanization of segregation by identifying with the all-American ethic of self-reliance. His grandfather instinctively understood that the deepest challenge of black life was to overcome dependency with self-reliance. Segregation and slavery were dependency. Freedom and equality were self-reliance. And then Yale University—out of the most pernicious self-absorption—takes a young man schooled in this ethic and plunges him back into dependency. Yale happily taints Clarence Thomas's achievements and deflates his self-esteem in its rush to appear innocent of racism. In the end, Yale *disallows* black self-reliance and reinforces the same black dependency that segregation imposed.

This, then, is the existential source of Thomas's famous anger. Every achievement he earns is made to stink of white paternalism. His grandfather had a better chance to be his own man than he does.

BLACK DEPENDENCY AS WHITE OPPORTUNITY

And then there is today's callow and sycophantic black leadership that actually sells black dependency as a white opportunity for moral deliverance. In the very bowels of slavery there was never a more egregious form of Uncle Tomism than this determination, even in the midst of freedom, to portray one's own people as nearly helpless victims.

So, understandably, as Thomas's career advances, the two great themes of his life—will and individuality—begin to get him in trouble. The story of the persecution that haunts his entire career in Washington makes up the second book within this memoir. By the time Thomas becomes chairman of the EEOC in the Reagan administration, he has become openly conservative. The tale of his outing as a conservative in the *Washington Post* by journalist Juan Williams describes that moment when his carefully evolved individuality—

his habit of thinking for himself—first clashes with the insecurity of his group. After this he never really knows peace again.

Clarence Thomas undergoes five confirmation hearings in ten years. And these hearings turn out to be the perfect platforms for the broader clash between a collective black insecurity and the willful individuality of this single black man. The civil-rights establishment—the very voice of black insecurity—despises him from the beginning. He inspires a kind of hysteria in them, and they come after him with a ferocity they would likely never muster for a white man. There simply could be no greater threat to civil-rights organizations than the themes that most animate Thomas's life: individuality and will. This establishment sees individual will as a futility in a racist society, and thinks of individuality as selfishness at best and group betrayal at worst.

But the civil-rights establishment does not account for what happened in Thomas's final confirmation hearing. Here persecution turned into crucifixion. Thomas himself says that abortion was the underlying issue that turned this hearing into a "high-tech lynching." This makes sense. For all his trouble with the civil-rights organizations, it is hard to imagine that they would display this level of moral and human blindness toward a black man. It is also hard to imagine—given the stereotypes surrounding black sexuality—that they would trot out a black woman to make sexual charges against a black man before the entire nation. If the civil-rights establishment was guilty of anything in this debacle, it was that they had made Thomas vulnerable by signaling to the world that he was an Uncle Tom. This made him fair game for liberals and feminists to attack with impunity. Here was a black man who could be openly sacrificed without repercussions—in an era of politically correct reverence for blacks generally.

Thomas convincingly denies all of Anita Hill's charges in this memoir. He also makes clear what her motives might be—his failure to promote her at one point, her ongoing career frustration, her unrequited fascination with him. He traces the "Long Dong Silver" reference back to an EEOC sexual-harassment case that Anita Hill used in her own research on sexual harassment.

But, in the end, Thomas was made to suffer this ignominious ordeal because of his lifelong struggle to become his own man, like his grandfather before him. He comes from a group that is—at least in its leadership—too insecure at the moment to countenance this degree of individuality and personal responsibility. And so he lost the protection of his group in a multiracial society and, thus, became vulnerable to other groups. (He became a poor black man nailed to the cross by wealthy white women.) This is how he paid for the individuality that he had nurtured in himself all his life. And, like much else in his life, it was a hard-earned individuality. I have often said that Clarence Thomas is the freest black man in America. He is clearly the first black American of his generation to become—openly and irrefutably—an individual. He is now an archetype that will inspire others. I can think of no greater achievement. **NR**

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■ **PUBLIC POLICY**

Doing Their Duties

Congress disguises protectionism as China indignation

STEPHEN SPRUIELL

To Zheng Xiaoyu, it all must have seemed so unfair. Bribery is common in China and rarely punished. But, in America, reports about poisoned pet food and tainted toothpaste had activated a familiar chorus line of jerking knees on Capitol Hill, and the Chinese government was desperate to demonstrate its commitment to product safety. Zheng protested that his punishment was "too severe," an understandable complaint. To be shot in the head for taking a few hundred thousand dollars in bribes as China's top food and drug regulator? When William Jefferson, the Louisiana Democrat caught with $90,000 in his freezer, hasn't even lost all of his committee assignments? In China, of course, they do things differently. A mere four months after his arrest, Zheng was executed.

China's rapid and brutal handling of the Zheng affair made headlines around the world, but it did not stanch the flood of China-related legislation that has poured from the 110th Congress. Since he was put to death in mid-July, lawmakers have introduced 24 such bills, bringing the total number of China-related bills introduced since January to 87. Twenty of those bills address concerns over product safety; most of the others stem from longstanding grievances over the value of China's currency or subsidies for its exporters. The fear now among free-traders—and Zheng's execution shows that the Chinese fear it too—is that Congress will use product safety as a rallying cry to pass a raft of legislation whose true aim is to punish China for competing too effectively against a handful of U.S. businesses.

It should be stated at the outset that *any* products imported into the United States should meet a minimum set of safety standards. U.S. companies typically develop in-house standards to protect their brands, but business arrangements involving long, complicated chains of foreign contractors and subcontractors demand more rigorous outside oversight. For instance, one recent product-safety scandal involved the U.S. toy giant Mattel, which had to recall 1.5 million toys after it learned that one of its contract manufacturers in China had used lead paint. (In a grim echo of the Zheng execution, the Chinese factory owner hanged himself.)

A DANGEROUS DIET

Last spring, before the lead-paint crisis, a spate of dead dogs and cats had pet-food makers initiating massive recalls across the U.S. When the killer ingredient turned out to be tainted wheat gluten from China, members of Congress started falling all over themselves to be the first to crack down on dangerous dog chow. Within weeks, Sen. Dick Durbin (D., Ill.) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D., Conn.) introduced the "Human and Pet Food Safety Act of 2007," directing the Food and Drug Administration to create a special certification program for any country wishing to export food products to the U.S.

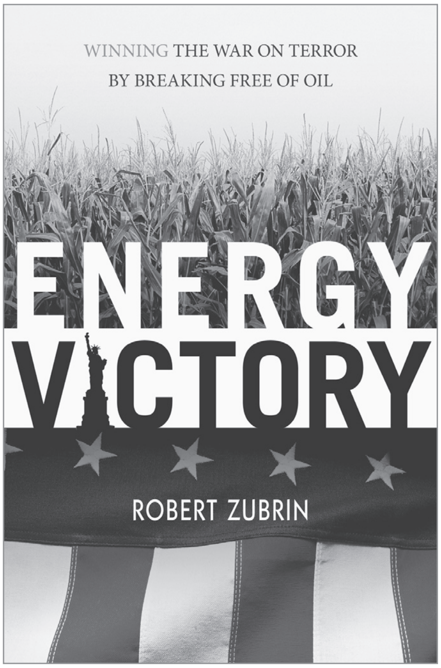
Durbin then took it a step further and, in a bill called the Imported Food Security Act, proposed collecting user fees from food importers to pay for the new inspections regime. (His partner in the House this time was Rep. Marcy Kaptur, Democrat of Ohio, whose previous work on China this year included a proposal to cancel China's normalized trading status.) "User fees on importers" is a fancy way of saying tariffs; they have approximately the same effect. All of a sudden, a decent idea (create a certification program that includes overseas inspections of Chinese food factories and testing labs) acquired a distinct whiff of protectionism.

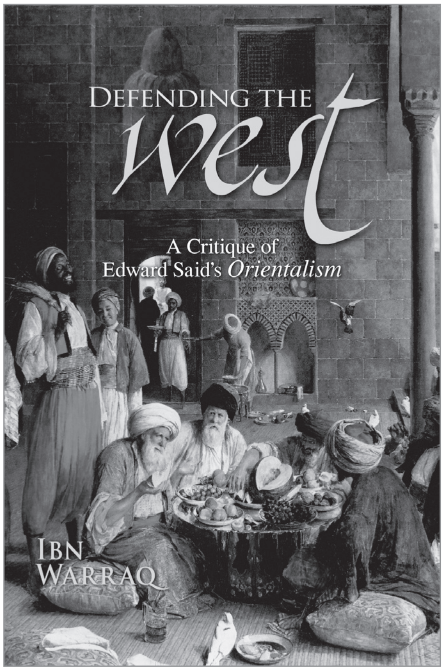
This is unfortunate, because Congress could accomplish some legitimate improvements in product safety if it approached the subject in a restrained, rational manner. (A bill introduced by Rep. Mike Ferguson, Republican of New Jersey, to require third-party lead-paint checks has garnered the support of a battered toy industry eager to win back the public's confidence in time for the Christmas shopping season.) But look at the other trade bills that have come out of this Congress: Does this look like a group of lawmakers you can trust to handle an issue as sensitive as product safety without letting their protectionist impulses rage?

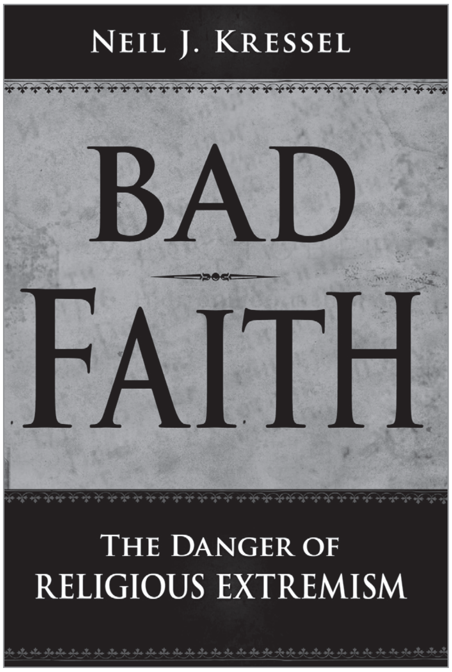
Take the bills that deal with currency. The currency issue has come to symbolize Congress's pig-headedness when it comes to trade with China. For several years now, an odd coalition of manufacturers, labor groups, and currency speculators has accused China of keeping its currency, the renminbi (RMB), artificially undervalued in order to make its exports cheaper and undercut competitors abroad. The only way to deal with this problem, they say, is for Congress to pass legislation that threatens China with high retaliatory tariffs unless it stops "manipulating" its currency.

China experts who disagree with this view have countered that—even though China's large supply of foreign reserves appears to indicate that its currency should be stronger—China has kept the RMB from "floating" upward simply because it does not yet have the financial institutions in place to cope with wild swings in the valuation of its currency. Currency instability was at the root of the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis, and no one wants to see that happen in China at a time when the consequences could be far more severe.

In a 2005 paper for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, economist Albert Keidel, an expert on Chinese exchange-rate issues, laid out another explanation for China's rapid accumulation of foreign reserves. Currency speculators, Keidel wrote, were pouring money into China in the form of speculative bets on the RMB; that is, these speculators were buying Chinese currency with the expectation that the "float the currency" crowd in Washington would succeed in bullying China into letting the value of the RMB rise, at which point the speculators could cash out with a huge profit. Furthermore, said Keidel, if the "artificially undervalued" RMB is fueling China's trade surplus with the U.S., it should be fueling a trade surplus with China's other trading partners, too. But it's not: In fact, China runs a trade deficit with the rest of the world, mostly because it is importing parts from its Asian neighbors (and paying dearly for them, if its currency is truly undervalued) and then exporting finished products to us.







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THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Nor is China's currency a top concern for most of the U.S. business community. Erin Ennis, vice president of the U.S.-China Business Council, says that in surveys of the council's 250-plus member companies, China's currency "is not the number-one issue for most companies doing business in or with China. There is a part of the business community that views that as its number-one issue. Saying that it's [the entire business community's] number-one issue is inaccurate."

Businesses on the council tend to have problems, such as finding qualified personnel in China, that Congress can do little about. But that doesn't mean Congress can't *create* problems for them: On last year's survey, members expressed their concern that the political fallout from a legislative "solution" to the currency problem will have a negative impact on their business interests in China. That's the extent of their concerns about China's exchange rate.

As if to vindicate the businessmen's astuteness in analyzing how Congress works, lawmakers have crafted dozens of "solutions" this year that run the gamut from the mildly annoying to the spectacularly disastrous. On the disastrous end, Reps. John Spratt (D., S.C.) and Sue Myrick (R., N.C.) introduced a bill that would impose an across-the-board tariff of 27.5 percent on all imports from China if it does not revalue the RMB.

It's hard to overstate how harmful such a measure would be. First, it would violate our commitment as a member of the World Trade Organization to refrain from slapping tariffs on whomever we feel like. Second, a tariff would have an immediate effect on the price of a wide swath of directly imported goods, as well as a residual effect on the price of American goods manufactured using Chinese imports, making both more expensive. Third, China would undoubtedly enact retaliatory tariffs—blocking access to our fastest-growing export market. Carolina textile manufacturers who are having difficulty competing with Chinese imports would see business improve, for a little while, until Turkey and Bangladesh ramped up production and offered consumers a cheaper alternative, at which point Reps. Spratt and Myrick would happily swoop down and deny them that choice as well.

Ohio Democrat Tim Ryan joined California Republican (and one-note presidential candidate) Duncan Hunter to create a slightly more nuanced but just as damaging approach called the Fair Currency Act of 2007. This bill would classify the "misalignment" in China's exchange rate as an export subsidy, thus exposing Chinese imports to what are known as countervailing duties.

Countervailing duties are tariffs that the Commerce Department is authorized to levy against subsidized imports in certain cases. These duties are regulated by the WTO, and there is little chance that the "Fair Currency Act" would pass WTO scrutiny if challenged. The WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures stipulates that in order to impose countervailing duties, a country must be able to demonstrate a causal link between subsidized imports and injury to a domestic industry. We are nowhere near that point with China's exchange rate. How, exactly, among the wild tangle of factors affecting competition between Chinese imports and domestic products, is the Commerce Department supposed to isolate the effect of China's exchange rate and prove that that's what did the damage?

Finally, on the mildly annoying end, we find the bill by Sens. Max Baucus (D., Mont.) and Chuck Grassley (R., Iowa) designed to ratchet up the pressure on China until it floats the RMB. First, the bill takes away the treasury secretary's discretion to determine whether China is manipulating its currency and directs him instead to use a formula that is designed to yield such a finding. Once the treasury secretary declares China's currency to be "misaligned," China will have six months to revalue the RMB before a series of punitive measures sets in. These measures would include plugging China's exchange rate into a formula for determining antidumping duties, which are another form of tariff the U.S. can impose on subsidized imports. This provision would run into the same kind of trouble at the WTO that the Ryan-Hunter bill would: The relevant agreements do not consider favorable exchange rates a "subsidy."

THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME

The Baucus-Grassley bill stands the greatest chance of building the veto-proof majority any of these bills would need to become law, but it's still a long shot. What's most depressing about these bills is what they say about the political atmosphere of the current Congress. It is by all indications the most protectionist Congress of the last two decades, coming at a time when the U.S. has unprecedented opportunities to use free trade to expand our influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Put China aside for a moment and consider the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement, completed last June and awaiting a vote in Congress.

The U.S.-Korea pact would be the biggest of its kind since NAFTA, expected to expand trade between the countries by more than $20 billion. More important, it would strengthen ties between the U.S. and Korea at a time when such a move is needed to balance China's growing power. It is important for the stability of the region that China's rise continue peacefully. To that end, trading

R. Genn
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Chinese president Hu Jintao

ROMAN GENN

with China gives us more leverage with the Chinese regime than we would have if we shut China out of our markets. And building upon existing alliances with nearby Asian democracies reduces their economic dependence on China and acts as a check on China's hegemonic ambitions.

The renewal of the president's fast-track trade-promotion authority, which allows him to submit trade agreements to Congress for an up-or-down vote, would also increase our influence in the region. Fast-track, which expired on June 30, would allow the administration a freer hand in solving some of the real problems plaguing companies doing business in China, from inadequate intellectual-property safeguards to increased market access for exporters.

The current Congress appears unlikely to take up either of these important tasks. It is holding up the Korea deal over concerns about market access for American beef and cars. As for the president's fast-track authority, the Democrats are loath to approve anything that might be interpreted as giving George W. Bush "more power"; Korea and fast-track will probably be battles for the next president to fight.

Which is a shame. Trade with China is a force for growth in our economy, and stronger ties with Korea are vital to our strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Some U.S. businesses are struggling to compete with Chinese imports, but hundreds more are prospering thanks to freer trade with China. Manufacturers who import cheaper parts from China have seen the impact on their bottom lines, and, while the rate at which we buy things from China is increasing, the rate at which we sell things to China is increasing faster.

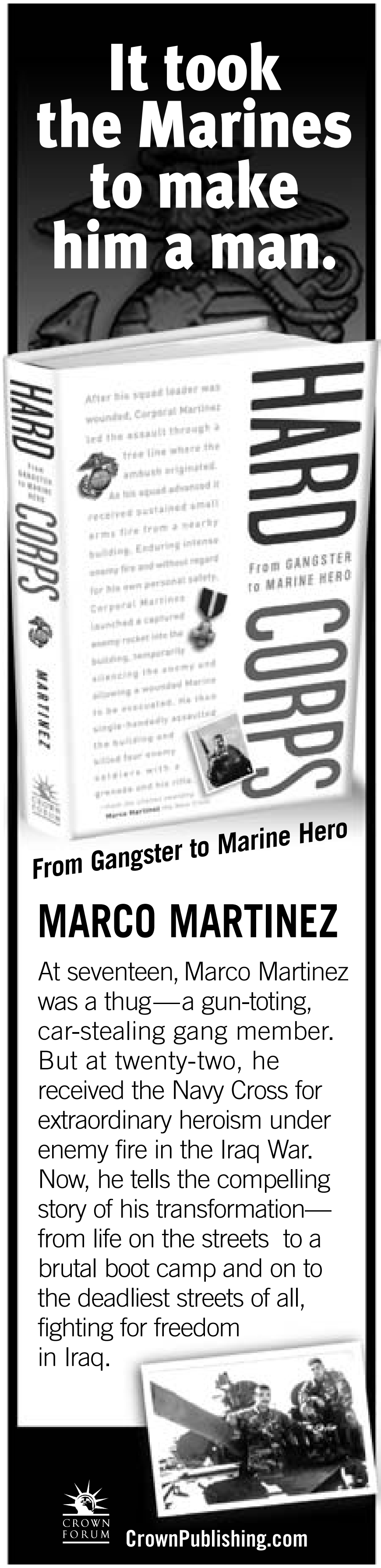
Protectionist lawmakers argue that our trade deficit with China (about a third of our total trade deficit) is too large. Its size is irrelevant, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. "The growth in trade that results from lowered trade barriers is generally beneficial regardless of its effects on the balance of trade," the CBO reported in a 2003 study. "It is the growth in both exports *and imports* of each country that allows production to shift to the most efficient producers and thereby expands output."

This "shift" is the real reason some lawmakers have gone to the mattresses. Although trade with China has boosted the gross domestic product, put downward pressure on prices, and done all this without increasing overall unemployment, it has also, according to a China Business Forum report released last year, "contribut[ed] to a decades-long shift in the structure of U.S. employment away from manufacturing and toward services."

It's long past time for lawmakers from manufacturing districts to recognize two things. First: This jobs shift began before China was a major U.S. trading partner and for reasons that have more to do with productivity gains than trade. Manufacturing in the U.S. remains robust; we're doing an increasing amount of work with fewer workers.

The second is that free-traders are willing to meet them halfway on assistance to workers who can demonstrate that they lost their jobs to overseas competition, but only if it means more support for free-trade deals. Baucus introduced a bill in January that would expand trade-adjustment assistance, but so far he has offered nothing but antagonism on the issue of China. Why should we expand the subsidies if we're not expanding trade?

Unfortunately, these lawmakers may not be able to compromise anymore, even if they wanted to. Too many freshman Democrats either owe their seats to anti-trade rhetoric (Rep. Heath Shuler of North Carolina) or genuinely believe that free trade is destroying the country (Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio). Either way, the anti-trade Dems (and Republicans) form a powerful bloc in Congress that will prove difficult to overcome, and a glance at their long list of policy initiatives—from protectionism disguised as public safety to trade-adjustment assistance without trade—shows that they're determined not just to block trade agreements, but to play an active part in rolling back the expansions of trade we've seen over the past decade. A final sad aspect of the Zheng Xiaoyu affair is that his execution is unlikely to have its intended effect, at least in the U.S. Congress: Product safety is just the latest red herring from its growing cadre of protectionists. **NR**



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■ **CULTURE WATCH II**

One Writer, Unmotivated

An unhappy outing to a GetMotivated! seminar

MARK HEMINGWAY

STEVE FORBES's speech is making me sick to my stomach, and it has nothing to with what he's saying. In fact, along with the most of the near-capacity crowd at the Verizon Center, a sports arena in downtown Washington, I largely agree with his anti-tax blast. But as first speaker at the D.C. stop of the Get Motivated! seminar—the "Monsters of Rock" of motivational speaking—Forbes tries to face the 360-degree audience by walking in a slow circle, moving his hands up and down consistently, rhythmically, almost lazily. From about ten rows back it looks like he's conducting an orchestra on Valium. Sleep deprivation always upsets my stomach, and I've gotten up early. I skipped breakfast too. Now Forbes is adding to my gastrointestinal distress. So why am I here?

The better question is: Who *isn't* here? The Verizon Center—normally home to the Washington Wizards and Justin Timberlake concerts—has just over 20,000 seats, and the place is nearly packed at 8 A.M. on a Thursday. Of course, the crowd is not here just to see Forbes. Get Motivated! is supposed to last until 4:45, and Forbes is only the first of several marquee names. Today's headliners are Colin Powell and Sugar Ray Leonard, but other Get Motivated! regulars include Rudy Giuliani (well, at least until his campaign began in earnest), Mikhail Gorbachev, George Foreman, Goldie Hawn, Jerry Lewis, Joe Montana, Ed McMahon, William Shatner, and Benjamin Netanyahu. Past speakers have included Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Gerald Ford. (Bill Clinton does gigs for Tony Robbins's competing organization at $300,000 a pop—but only in Canada.)

Motivational speaking is a bona fide marketing juggernaut. Marketdata Enterprises estimates the industry pulled in $9.6 billion in 2006, up from $5.7 billion in 2000. Tickets to Get Motivated! are $225 at the door, though most people get in for far less. The organization offers steep discounts for groups—I saw offers of just $49 for a whole group. The real money is made on the speakers' accompanying books, CDs, DVDs, personal-coaching services, and, yes, more seminars.

The motivational-speaking business has created its own heroes—a slew of people who are successful for talking about success. Appearing at today's Get Motivated! is Zig Ziglar, a World War II vet and former salesman who pioneered the industry in the early 1970s. Though not as well-known as today's celebrity speakers, Ziglar, now in his 80s, remains as big a draw as Colin Powell or Sugar Ray Leonard, and his appearance fees are commensurate. In fact, according to Marketdata, the top twelve motivational speakers in the United States made $328 million in 2005.

It seems that motivational speaking is largely a Red State phenomenon that rakes in billions while the cultural elite remain happily oblivious, like NASCAR or Branson, Mo. Prior to showing up at Get Motivated! I had no idea that this was so. But from the beginning of the seminar there are two overwhelming themes—patriotism and religion, and Get Motivated! is coy about neither. Its founders are Peter and Tamara Lowe, a couple who continue to run the organization today. Their smiling mugs appear on the cover of the Get Motivated! workbook, a glossy magazine with self-help articles, interviews with today's speakers, summaries of the regular speakers' talking points, and blank pages for additional notes. But what catches my eye is a banner headline that reads, "GET MOTIVATED!" and has a waving American flag behind it.

The seminar kicks off with the national anthem. An attractive young gal in a pantsuit bounds onstage and takes Francis Scott Key for a ride while the crowd searches vainly for a flag to focus on. The only one to be found is the organization's logo, which is on all four corners of the stage. Following "The Star-Spangled Banner," Tamara Lowe takes the stage as emcee. Short and spunky, she is not unattractive, but her canary-yellow jacket is positively retina-searing under the harsh stage lights. Further, her crisp perm has such bold highlights that it looks like her hairstylist simply dropped a Lhasa apso on her head. Tamara informs everybody that Get Motivated!'s surveys reveal that, if you're in attendance, you're among the "top income earners" in the D.C. metro area.

But let's face it, if you're really that successful, your time is too valuable to spend a workday listening to people tell you how to be successful. It's pure psychology—flattering everybody incessantly and maintaining high energy levels is the only way Get Motivated! can hold the crowd's attention for nine hours of speakers. That's why there are musical acts and audience-participation activities between speakers—including my first and, with luck, only exposure to contemporary Christian rap. (I must admit, however, that the dance contest to win a Disney World vacation—the winner got on his stomach to do a frighteningly credible middle-aged version of "the worm"—was wholesome fun.)

A SCORECARD

The day's ten speakers are of wildly varying quality. Without enumerating their finer points, here is a short summary:

● Steve Forbes is pretty good, languid hand gestures aside. He offers some useful nuts-and-bolts business advice tacked on to the same anti-tax stump speech he gave when running for president. Peter Lowe says he tells all his speakers to avoid politics, but the roster has a decidedly Republican bent, as does the audience. D.C. is about as Democratic a city as you'll find, but Forbes gets thunderous applause when he tells the crowd that taxes are too high and we need to take the current tax code and "kill it, drive a stake through its heart, and hope it never rises again."

● Prominent televangelist Robert Schuller looks and sounds like a plumper, folksier version of actor James Coburn. A disciple of the Presbyterian minister Norman Vincent Peale, who wrote *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Schuller is a formidable influence on Rick Warren and the newer generation of evangelicals. With its revivalist overtones and large TV screens, Get Motivated! is perhaps similar to nothing so much as Schuller's Crystal Cathedral.

Schuller talks almost exclusively about God, but never in an explicitly Christian way. His gifts as a speaker are evident, but so is his age. He says such things as, “Success is a process—you can remember that, it’s only three words!” Not only can I remember that, I can also count.

● I think Get Motivated! is getting somewhere when investment guru Phil Town takes the stage. A Warren Buffett devotee, Town is an immensely likable former special-forces soldier and Vietnam vet, and the bestselling author of *Rule #1*. At first he appears to be offering good advice about value investing. But here is that advice in a nutshell:

Step 1: Find a great publicly traded company whose stock is sure to rise.

Step 2: Buy that stock for half what it’s worth.

Step 3: After you’ve bought, follow Rule #1: Never lose money!

Thanks, Phil. To make matters worse, his spiel ends up being one long pitch for an Internet stock-picking scheme, which he explains with a flurry of graphs. Naturally, to use his websites and software you must attend *another* seminar (this one two days long). That will set you back ~~$6,000~~ only $995! (*Plus $299 every six months thereafter.) It’s a depressingly slick pitch—so slick that, when Town offers a free trial in exchange for filling out a form that requires your credit-card number on a conditional basis, there’s a stampede to sign-up tables that have been quietly set up around the arena. My Rule #1 of financial advice is: Don’t hand your credit card to people who tell you the stock market is easy.

Zig Ziglar at the Verizon Center

WENN PHOTOS

● The crowd is now suitably amped for Ziglar. He receives arguably the most enthusiastic reception of the day, and it seems almost too jarring for a gray-haired man in his 80s who has to be helped onstage. Ziglar jokes that he isn’t retired but “refired,” though there’s not much fire in him today. He is famous for running around stages, and for his enthusiastic use of props. We are informed, however, that, owing to a recent fall, Ziglar suffers from “positional vertigo” and will be sitting down for an interview with his daughter about his career. Ziglar is immensely charming, and I don’t begrudge him his *Hee Haw*–caliber jokes. (E.g., “I read my Bible and my newspaper every day—that way I know what both sides are up to.”) But it’s mildly dispiriting that the highlight of his act is watching a younger Ziglar on the arena video screens performing his greatest hits, mostly folksy tales about the power of persistence.

● Next is “billionaire” Bill Bartmann. In fact, Bartmann was a billionaire only for a brief time in the late 1990s—just before authorities discovered that his debt-purchasing company had created a shell corporation to purchase its own debt, hiding mammoth losses from investors. Bartmann blames his partner for the fraud, and was acquitted in late 2003. I snooze through his speech until he begins telling his life story. Specifically, I snap to attention after he says, “And for the next few years traveling the country in the carnival, I learned things no 14-year-old should have to learn.” Bartmann brushes right past this bombshell, and if I’d paid the full $225 I would feel entitled to bum-rush the stage and demand the salacious details.

● You might not think of Colin Powell as a guy to bring down the house, but this is D.C. and the former secretary of state is in fine form. His humor is even surprisingly adept. When asked what he misses about government service, he responds, “My 757,” and laments the absurdity of airport security. “If you know I’m General Powell,” he says of a TSA official, “why don’t you go over there and look for Osama bin Laden?” This produces much laughter. Later Powell tells how his negotiations with Gorbachev began to warm at the end of the Cold War, eventually leading Powell to realize that the downfall of the Evil Empire was near. Afterward, the man sitting next to me has tears in his eyes.

AMERICAN VIRTUES

As Powell finishes up, I check the time on my cellphone, eager for this thing to end. What on earth makes people by the thousands think they benefit from events like this?

Certainly, hard work and success are distinctly American virtues; and Get Motivated! is very clear in establishing a link between the two. It reinforces the idea that you can still produce something of value to your fellow man and be lauded for it in an era where releasing a sex tape on the Internet or finding a dead rodent in your Happy Meal is a step toward financial independence.

Further, Get Motivated! refuses to disassociate these bedrock American values from America itself. At least half a dozen times during the program, speakers thank the military personnel in attendance for their service. Is this pandering? Maybe. Is this refreshing to hear in the current political climate? Definitely.

And while some attendees are undoubtedly surprised by the seminar’s religious tone (during his speech, Peter Lowe cries out, “Lord Jesus, I need you. . . . Make me into the person you want me to be!”), nobody I see is outwardly upset by the repeated and explicit acknowledgment that faith and Judeo-Christian ethics are key components of success. Get Motivated!’s own success is testament to the fact that thousands of Americans yearn to have this message affirmed.

I wish I could report that Get Motivated! argues its main theme—values are integral to success—with consistent integrity. But there are pitfalls in blurring the line between faith and marketing. Too much of Get Motivated! exploits the lowest common denominator of success: materialism. Not every speaker resorts to that tactic, but, in the more garish displays, Phil Town points to a picture of a luxury Mercedes on the jumbotron, and Bill Bartmann flaunts photos of his McMansion. Both prompt “ooh”s and “ah”s from the crowd.

I think about that as I head home to my ’96 Honda and one-bedroom apartment. As it happens, my first wedding anniversary is the next weekend, and my daughter is two weeks old today. So far, getting married and having a child have been the most financially ruinous decisions I’ve ever made—but that’s my definition of success, and coming home to them is all the motivation I need. **NR**

the long view

ROB LONG

Transcript from *Larry King Live* October 4, 2008

LARRY KING: “Tomorrow night! Ryan Seacrest hosts! From Key West, Florida, hello!”

CALLER: “Hi, Larry, hello, Mr. President.”

LARRY KING: “Is that right? Are you still president?”

MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD: “Oh, no, Larry. I resigned months ago.”

LARRY KING: “Before the book came out?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Yes, yes. Of course.”

LARRY KING: “Caller, what’s your question?”

CALLER: “I just wanted to know when Mr. Ahma . . .”

AHMADINEJAD: “. . . dinejad. It’s really not so difficult.”

LARRY KING: “Have you thought about changing it?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Honestly? Yeah, I’ve thought about it. But part of the journey I’ve been on for the past year has been all about being myself, you know? Being who I really am.”

LARRY KING: “Hardest person to know is yourself. I could sing a few bars of that! *Garlique™! Garlic for your health!*”

AHMADINEJAD: “Also, the whole changing-your-name-to-fit-in thing is sort of . . .”

LARRY KING: “Jewish?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Don’t go there, Larry! Do NOT go there! No, no, but seriously, what I was going to say was it’s kind of retro, you know? And Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is all about looking forward.”

LARRY KING: “Got it. Not about the Jew stuff. About the future. Tuesday night! The whole hour with the *Project Runway* gang!”

CALLER: “Hello?”

LARRY KING: “Is the caller there?”

CALLER: “I’m still here, Larry. I never got to ask my question.”

LARRY KING: “Go right ahead.”

CALLER: “I just wanted to know when he knew that he was gay.”

LARRY KING: “Good question. Mahmoud? How does that thing work? You’re with a gal and then suddenly you think, ‘Eh, not so much’? Is it a thing you struggle with all your life and then, I don’t know, you think, ‘Hey, my parents are dead, what am I waiting for?’ Or maybe you’re walking around eating a deli sandwich or something and bam! There’s this big gay lightbulb over your head?”

AHMADINEJAD: “No, no, Larry. Look, everybody has their own story, their own journey. Mine started in a hotel room during my trip to New York last year. It was late, I was alone . . .”

LARRY KING: “Hey! Keep it clean! I’m just kidding. Go on.”

AHMADINEJAD: “And I was channel flipping, you know how that goes.”

LARRY KING: “Are you kidding? I love to sit in front of the set and flip. It’s what killed my sixth marriage. Wait, no, seventh. Seventh.”

AHMADINEJAD: “Anyway, I was flipping, and suddenly there was this show. *High School Musical*. About all of these kids in high school putting on some kind of musical, and I watched it and I loved it so much that I just knew. I’m gay. I’m gay and I love *High School Musical*.”

LARRY KING: “Wait, no. I’m *on* my seventh. It’s what killed my *sixth* marriage. Sixth.”

AHMADINEJAD: “And from that moment, things just sort of tumbled together. I remember telling people, ‘Hey, there are no gay people in Iran,’ and you know, I was in such deep denial, it was more like, ‘Hey, I can’t see all the gay people in Iran.’ Because the truth is, Iran is a very very gay place.”

LARRY KING: “Sure. Sure. The food, the robes, all those pistachio nuts. I get it. Look, even at my age—and I think I’ve pretty much proven which side of the street I work, know what I mean?—but even at my age, you know, you see a nice-looking guy on the street and you get to thinking. You wonder. Am I curious? Sure. Anyway. From New York, New York! Hello!”

CALLER: “Hi Larry. Hey, Mahmoud. I was just wondering if you had anyone special in your life?”

LARRY KING: “Relationships. Difficult? Easy? Which one?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Honestly, Larry, I’ve been so busy with the book tour and the reality show and whatnot, that there really hasn’t been time for me to ‘date.’ I am seeing someone, but I choose to keep that side of things private.”

LARRY KING: “Who is it?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Well, I’m trying to keep it private.”

LARRY KING: “Understood. Discretion! Privacy! We’ve almost forgotten what those words mean. So who is it?”

AHMADINEJAD: “I’d prefer . . .”

LARRY KING: “Another celebrity? Someone you met on *Dancing with the Stars*?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Larry, as I said, I’d prefer not to talk about . . .”

LARRY KING: “Airport men’s room? That’s a thing now, apparently. *Garlique!*”

AHMADINEJAD: “Larry, you know, being in a relationship with me is hard. I’m a celebrity. My schedule is nuts. Everyone wants a piece of me.”

LARRY KING: “And the Iranians want to kill you.”

AHMADINEJAD: “And there’s that, yeah.”

LARRY KING: “Not into the whole ‘gay Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’ situation.”

AHMADINEJAD: “No, no they’re not.”

LARRY KING: “Big into the Islamic stuff.”

AHMADINEJAD: “Well, Islam means ‘peace,’ of course. But, yeah, they’re still way into that stuff. Not that I’m not, Larry. I’m still a proud Islamic fundamentalist.”

LARRY KING: “Except for the guy-on-guy stuff?”

AHMADINEJAD: “Right. Right. Except for that.”

LARRY KING: “The book is *Imama’s Boy: From ‘Drive Israel into the Sea’ to ‘You Go, Girl.’*”

AHMADINEJAD: “Thanks for having me, Larry.”

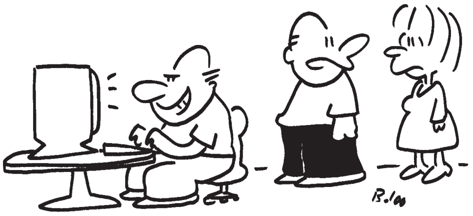
LARRY KING: “This weekend! The incomparable Fred Travalena!”

HELP!!!!

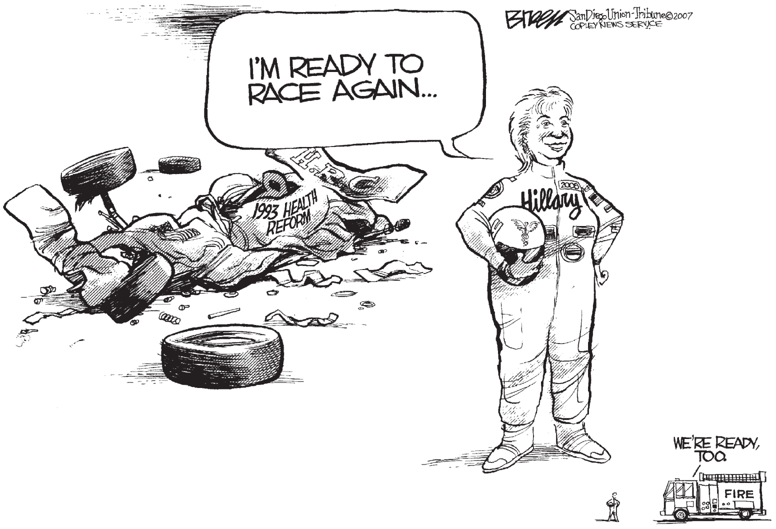
STAYING ON

MoveOn is seething. Soros
Consults blood-pressure docs.
Pelosi's looking vulpine.
Digestive aftershocks
Leave Murtha running, often.
Democrat candidates
Move backward, too (the bastards),
Those bug-out starting gates.

—W. H. VON DREELE



"Fred has stuff on his PC that isn't PC at all!"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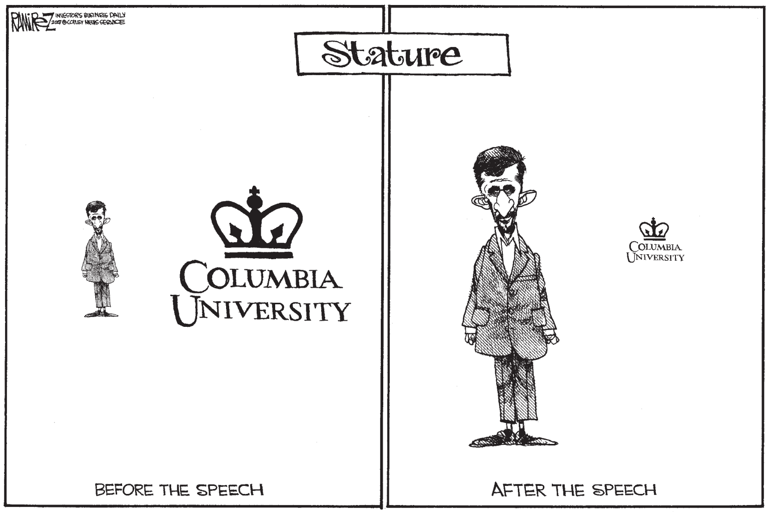
FIRE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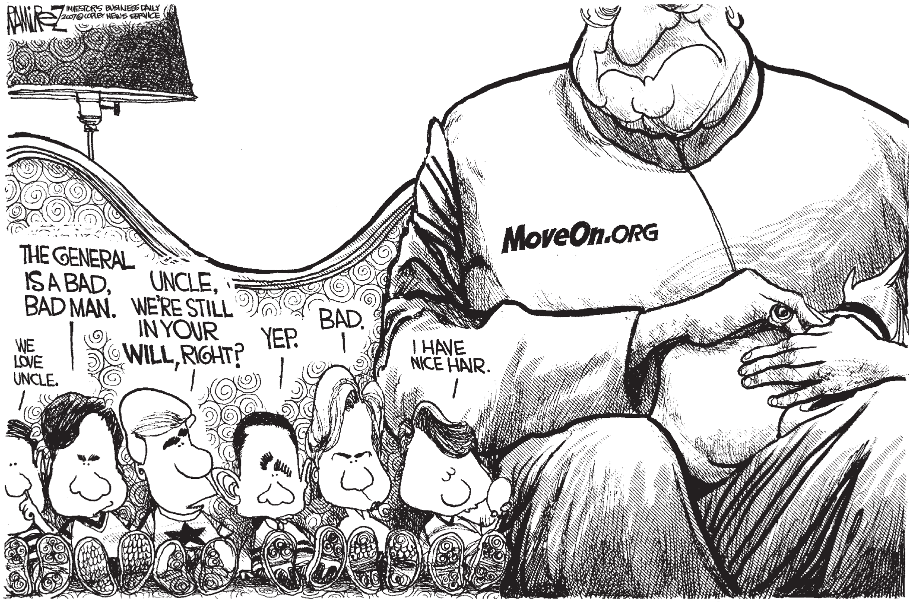
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MoveOn.ORG
WE LOVE UNCLE.
THE GENERAL IS A BAD, BAD MAN.
UNCLE, WE'RE STILL IN YOUR WILL, RIGHT?
YEP.
BAD.
I HAVE NICE HAIR.

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the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

Mommies Dearest

SALLY FIELD probably thought she was being new and daring when she screeched "If mothers ruled the world there wouldn't be any goddamn wars in the first place," but her recipe for perpetual world peace is right out of the hit song of 1915:

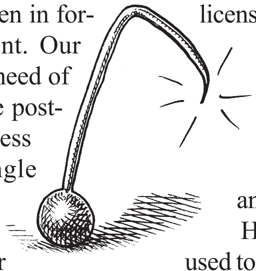
I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,
It's time to lay the sword and gun away.
There'd be no war today if mothers all would say
I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier.

If Sally could sing she could have gotten a lot of mileage out of that, but she would have to be a quick-change artist to account for motherhood's change of heart two years later. The hit song of 1917 went:

America, I raised a boy for you,
America, you'll find him staunch and true.
Place a gun upon his shoulder, he is ready to do or die.
America, he is my only one,
My hope, my pride and joy.
But if I had another he would march beside his brother,
America, here's my boy!

Gidget picked the wrong time to do her Cornelia number because we don't regard motherhood the way we used to. As usual, language reveals what people think they are hiding. Take the word "mommy." When Republicans call Democrats the "Mommy Party" it conveys weakness, meekness, and whatever other ignominious "-ness" the speaker has in mind. A decade ago, "Mommy Track" expressed contempt for the woman who, opting to interrupt her career to raise children, took herself out of the fast track of promotions and partnerships for the perpetual juniorships of the second tier: i.e., a loser. And "Mommy food"? That's mac and cheese for the self-indulgent, mashed potatoes and gravy for those without the right stuff, the French toast of surrender and defeat.

Or take the word "mother." At least Sally Field used it; most people don't anymore. Now it's "mom," even in formal speeches by the president. Our national vocabulary has great need of "mom" because it conveys the post-feminist arrangement, regardless of what that might be. "Single mom" and "working mom" supply the requisite vagueness because we can't tell whether she's divorced or never-married; both can mean either, but neither pins anybody down.



When was the last time you heard the phrase "wife and mother"? It used to run together, as in "wife 'n' mother," but now it has vanished, sometimes replaced by "soccer mom" but not always—that's too close to "suburban mom," which is too close to wife 'n' mother, which is why politicians have stopped talking about soccer moms.

And when was the last time you heard the word "housewife"? It's verboten; it would get you into rehab quicker than you could say "I apologize to any and all I have offended."

The only thing worse is "*just* a housewife." Now we say "stay-at-home mom" so that everyone can assume she's realizing the latest American Dream: *working at home.* If we like, we can assume the presence of an employed live-in husband, and if we don't like, we can assume there was an old shoemaker who lived in a house.

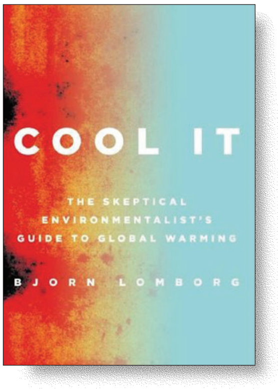
Meanwhile, amid the vagueness and opacity of our motherhood vocabulary, motherhood per se has taken on an in-your-face immediacy of the most literal kind. I was eating dinner with one hand and clicking the remote with the other when suddenly I came to one of the Health channels featuring a close-up of a vagina with a baby coming out of it. Last winter an avid Chicago Bears fan who was nine months pregnant rented advertising space on her belly for two tickets to the Super Bowl and was photographed displaying the ad. The public breastfeeding controversy has heated up again, this time involving a Harvard grad who sued for the right to use a breast pump during a nine-hour medical license exam. (Incidentally, breastfeeding used to be called "nursing" but that's out now. Too confusing; somebody might duck the old motherhood one-two punch and miss the point.)

Hollywood, where L. B. Mayer used to burst into sentimental tears whenever anyone mentioned mothers, now bursts into laughter despite Sally Field's efforts. Motherhood, or her startling version of it, is the cornerstone of Britney Spears jokes, and everyone is waiting with bated breath to see Angelina Jolie's rewrite of *King Solomon's Mines.* The African safari has tiny game in its sights now, and Allan Quatermain has been replaced by bwana Angelina, the Great White Mother whose narcissistic pseudo-sanctity is making a joke of adoption.

Let's face it: We like the idea of motherhood, we like the symbols of motherhood, we like the metaphors of motherhood, and we like the cute, casual vocabulary of neo-motherhood that we have cooked up, but we don't like motherhood, and we're going to like it even less very soon now. As the health-care controversy heats up, the woman most closely associated with it will take on the ultimate maternal symbolism of she who tends to the sick. That face! That voice! Do you want Hillary to kiss it and make it well? I'd rather be a Dickensian orphan. **NR**

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

Cooler Heads Prevail



Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming, by Bjørn Lomborg (Knopf, 256 pp., $21)

STEVEN F. HAYWARD

Is there really anything new to be said about climate change? Hasn't the issue become the public-policy equivalent of *Groundhog Day*, with the same arguments playing out in the same way every week?

Perhaps there is. The weary and repetitive character of the climate-change debate is masking a number of fundamental changes now taking place that, 20 or 30 years from now, are likely to be recognized as the turning point on the issue. Despite the relentless media and advocacy-group frenzy, the case for *catastrophic* global warming is fraying around the edges. The alarmists have found themselves suddenly hoist by their own petard, as the latest massive report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) noticeably reined in its predictions of future doom and gloom (less sea-level rise, lower temperature rise, admissions of serious problems in its climate models, and so forth). Having thumped skeptics about ignoring the IPCC-certified "consensus," the alarmists are now criticizing the IPCC for being "too conservative." Increasingly it appears that the problem of climate change is likely to be more modest and manageable than the heated rhetoric would have you imagine, just as the apocalyptic 1960s predictions of the "population bomb" turned out to be wrong.

Mr. Hayward is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and the co-author of AEI's bimonthly *Environmental Policy Outlook*.

It is increasingly apparent even to the Kyoto Protocol's European cheerleaders that the Kyoto approach is a dead end. Meanwhile, up on Capitol Hill, the new Democratic leadership talks a big game on climate change but is considering only the most modest of measures, which, if eventually brought to a vote, will probably degenerate into another pork-fest and subsidy game. Seldom if ever has there been a larger gap between the rhetoric and the legislation being considered. It's as if Lincoln and the Republicans of the 1850s had said, "Slavery is evil; therefore let us adopt tax incentives, impose a few regulations on slave auctions, and subsidize the production of new farm equipment."

The alarmists say the lack of dramatic action (such as, e.g., a 50 to 70 percent cut in greenhouse emissions over the next 40 years) is due to the opposition of the "denial industry" and fossil-fuel interests, but this is a convenient fiction. The real problem is that *no one* is willing to enact measures with the gargantuan costs that would be involved. Eventually even environmentalists are going to come to see that global warming is the issue that ate them alive. And policymakers are going to begin looking at alternative perspectives on how to deal with the actual problems of climate change.

This is where Bjørn Lomborg comes in. Lomborg burst on the scene in 2001 with *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, pointing out that the data do not support the familiar green "litany" of planet-wide calamity. For this heresy, environmentalists have predictably compared him to Holocaust deniers and worse. He followed up this effort with the "Copenhagen Consensus," an ambitious convocation of top social scientists (including several Nobel laureates) that aimed at ranking global priorities such as AIDS, malnutrition, water supplies, and climate change. No matter how the methodology was sliced up, climate change came in last on the list. For this, the head of the IPCC compared Lomborg to Hitler. "What is the difference between Lomborg's view on humans and Hitler's?" the IPCC's Rajendra Pachauri said to a Danish newspaper in 2004. "If you were to accept Lomborg's way of thinking, then maybe what Hitler did was the right thing."

Having already resorted to the exhausted *reductio ad Hitlerum*, environmentalists will be hard-pressed for new invective to use against *Cool It*, Lomborg's new book focusing exclusively on climate change. Notwithstanding Lomborg's major concession that "global warming is real and man-made" and is "beyond debate," environmentalists will not be happy. Lomborg questions "whether hysteria and headlong spending on extravagant CO_2-cutting programs at an unprecedented price is the only possible response." Any competent economist can tell you that deep CO_2 reductions fail every cost-benefit test; this is true even of economists, such as Yale's William Nordhaus, who accept the catastrophic-global-warming scenario.

Environmentalists, along with most liberals, snort at cost-benefit analysis—an attitude best expressed by a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* several years ago from environmental "archdruid" David Brower that bore the headline: "Economics Is a Form of Brain Damage." The virtue of *Cool It* is that Lomborg effectively translates the aseptic language of cost-benefit analysis into persuasive plain English (for wonks, a longer and more technical version of *Cool It* is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press).

Consider the case of a persistent cause of over 1.2 million deaths, 50 million injuries, and a half-trillion dollars in damages worldwide every year. Then ponder that a simple policy change could eliminate nearly all of this harm. The cause: automobile accidents. The remedy: Lower the speed limit to 5 miles per hour. But of course no nation would ever do this, because it would make us so much poorer.

The benefits of auto use outweigh the risks, such that we don't even consider a modest reduction in speed limits, which studies show would significantly reduce auto-accident casualties. Instead, we invest in safer highways, air bags, seat belts, and other means to reduce the human cost of driving.

The use of fossil fuels presents the same tradeoff. As Lomborg states, "the benefits from moderately using fossil fuels vastly outweigh the costs." If anything, Lomborg understates this point. The tradeoff for arguably increasing the average global temperature by 0.8ºC in the 20th century has been nearly a doubling in life expectancy, a huge decline in infant mortality, and the steadily increasing spread of middle-class prosperity across the planet's population. Does anyone outside the tiny ranks of environmental extremists really wish we had not made this progress, which depended vitally on cheap energy? Acknowledging this calculus is environmentally incorrect, but it is the silent ground upon which practical policymakers will build policy. There simply is no near-term, large-scale alternative to fossil fuels. Deal with it.

Some climate skeptics will criticize Lomborg for conceding too much about the certainty of our knowledge of human-caused climate change. But he is doing an important service in changing the dynamics of the debate. And if it turns out that some or all of the warming we experience is the result of natural factors, then Lomborg's adaptation strategy will be all the more important. By the end of *Cool It*, Lomborg has neatly turned the tables on the emotional rhetoric of the alarmists: "I hope that in 40 years we will not have to tell our kids that we went for a long series of essentially unsuccessful command-and-control Kyotos that had little or no effect on the climate but left them poorer and less able to deal with problems of the future."

Lomborg thinks we should aim at modest reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions, invest heavily in energy research, and devote resources to adapting to changing conditions. Eventually, policymakers throughout the world are going to come around to Lomborg's point of view (indeed they already are, if the tenor of the recent APEC meeting in Australia is any indication), though they will do so kicking and screaming and with multiple genuflections toward the alarmist totems. Al Gore and other true believers won't ever be persuaded, but one day, perhaps not long from now, they are going to wake up to discover that the world has passed them by. **NR**

MR. ALFRED URUGUAY

He walked between the hard green oranges
—The puritan among gross images;
Stepped back from stiff bananas in alarm
And stood beneath a tall, immodest palm.

He saw that he would have to censor these
Lewd surfaces and cheap debaucheries—
A camera couldn't help but be obscene;
For candid as he looked, he was not mean.

Was life for him a brown tremendous whore
Enthroned atop the tropical manure?
He spit; and turning toward the mud-caked pigs,
Grunted, "I'm sick of excremental prigs."

How could he get the lame and stumbling muse
Out of her mire—end her furious abuse?
He wondered, walking hard against his age
His strict and solitary pilgrimage.

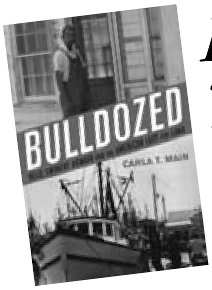
—RICHARD O'CONNELL

planetgore.nationalreview.com

Before the ice caps melt, before the rainforests disappear, before it's too late!—strap on your bike helmet, take a left at Kyoto, and head straight to . . .

planet gore

. . . National Review Online's newest blog. At Planet Gore, expert analysts keep you abreast of all the tree-hugging, CO2-vilifying environmental cases being fought by America's leading Hollywood documentarian and Internet-inventor, and his holier-than-thou gang of greenpeacenik planet-savers.



BULLDOZED

'KELO,' EMINENT DOMAIN AND THE AMERICAN LUST FOR LAND

by Carla Main | ISBN: 978-1-59403-193-9 | $25.95

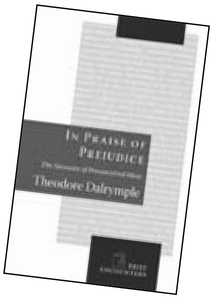
No domestic policy issue more angers or galvanizes the public than the controversy over eminent domain. Veteran journalist Carla Main delivers an incisive expose on this practice as she traces the history of eminent domain from our Founding to the recent U.S. Supreme Court case, Kelo v. New London. Along the way, Main relates the story of the Gore family of Freeport, Texas, and their struggle to hold onto their 56-year-old family business.

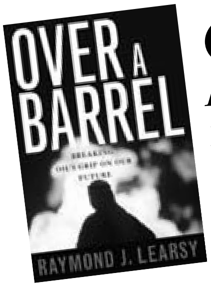
IN PRAISE OF PREJUDICE

THE NECESSITY OF PRECONCEIVED IDEAS

By Theodore Dalrymple | ISBN: 978-1-594032-02-8 | $20.00

"Prejudice," wrote Edmund Burke, "renders a man's virtue his habit." How strange that sounds to modern ears! Today, to call someone prejudiced is to relegate him to the lowest rung of intellectual life. But is there anyone who isn't prejudiced? As Dr Dalrymple argues in this brief and bracing rehabilitation both of prejudice itself and the necessity of prejudice, someone who walks out into the world completely unprejudiced is as helpless as a newborn babe.





OVER A BARREL

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By Raymond J. Learsy | ISBN: 978-1-594032-03-5 | $17.95

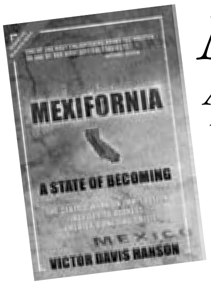
Want to know why you're paying so much at the pump? Longtime commodities trader Raymond J. Learsy explains the real reason behind today's most outrageous gas prices by lifting the veil of the Mid-east oil cartel, showing how OPEC is disastrously manipulating the oil markets—and, consequently, destabilizing the world's economy and threatening American security.

WHY THE DEMOCRATS ARE BLUE

SECULAR LIBERALISM AND THE DECLINE OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

By Mark Stricherz | ISBN: 978-1-594032-05-9 | $29.95

Why the Democrats are Blue argues that secular, educated elites, using a commission created at the 1968 convention in Chicago and later chaired by Senator George McGovern, took the Democratic Party away from working class and religious Democrats. This "quiet revolution" helps explain why six of the last nine Democratic presidential candidates have lost.



MEXIFORNIA

A STATE OF BECOMING

by Victor Davis Hanson | 1-59403-217-3 | $17.95

As immigration reform reaches critical mass in Washington, Victor Davis Hanson updates *Mexifornia,* his intensely personal political memoir, and ponders how California, the Southwest more broadly, and indeed the entire nation have been altered by America's hemorrhaging borders. Mexifornia is an indictment of those "progressive" ideologues and opportunists behind the policies that fail to integrate aliens into our mainstream and leave our borders unprotected.

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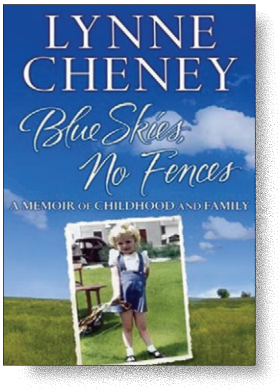
Don't Fence Her In



Blue Skies, No Fences: A Memoir of Childhood and Family, by Lynne Cheney (Threshold, 320 pp., $26)

MYRNA BLYTH

UNLIKE several of the memoirs that have climbed the best-seller list recently, Lynne Cheney's portrait of her Wyoming childhood does not include a schizophrenic mother or an abusive father.

Myrna Blyth, a contributor to NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE, is the author of *Spin Sisters: How the Women of the Media Sell Unhappiness—and Liberalism—to the Women of America* and (with Chriss Winston) *How to Raise an American: 1776 Fun and Easy Tools, Tips, and Activities to Help Your Child Love This Country.*

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT
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—Norman Podhoretz
www.nationalreview.com

Nor is it a tale of a poor girl from deprived circumstances who climbs the ladder and does spectacularly well, another familiar memoir theme.

It is, instead, a totally affectionate look back at her girlhood in the years after World War II in the prairie town of Casper, concluding with her high-school graduation in 1959. In the very first pages of the book she makes clear her attitude about the past she intends to explore: "To grow up in those years and in that place . . . was to be twice fortunate."

And yet, hers is not a story without problems and pain. For Mrs. Cheney traces not only her own history but that of her and her husband's Puritan and Mormon, Scots-Irish and German ancestors. Their experiences, generation after generation, as they moved westward were full of "the calamities and struggles that are part of the American story." There are constant recollections of relatives' failed businesses, lost "ragtown" houses, and early deaths (often caused by accidents on the farm). One story, which reads like a poignant excerpt from a Willa Cather novel, tells of a poor widow whose land was stolen by an unscrupulous banker. On her last day on the property, she went out to gather crab-apples, carrying a blanket, thinking she might sit awhile to say goodbye to the farm where her husband had burned to death in a kerosene fire and she and her son had long struggled. Cheney writes: "But when she whipped [the blanket] into the air, a young bull she had raised from a calf, charged, goring her in the stomach. [Her son] got her on the train for Omaha but in those days before penicillin was in use, she died." There are other family stories almost as grim.

Lynne Cheney's book is a totally affectionate look back at her girlhood in the years after World War II in the prairie town of Casper.

She also acknowledges that the Casper she grew up in was "not some crime- and sin-free Pleasantville." There was, "behind the courthouse, stretching out to the West, a district known for gambling, bootleg liquor, and prostitution." And her parents were not at all an idealized *Father Knows Best* '50s couple. Her dad, who swigged Bourbon and Coke on family car trips, ultimately died of cirrhosis and had a fiery temper akin to that of the hero of his favorite television comedy, Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*. Her mother was often ill and, as the years went by, less and less tolerant of her husband's rages. As a teenager, Cheney admits she often escaped across town to where Dick Cheney, her high-school boyfriend, lived, because his family "got through dinner without World War III breaking out, which definitely was different from the way my household functioned."

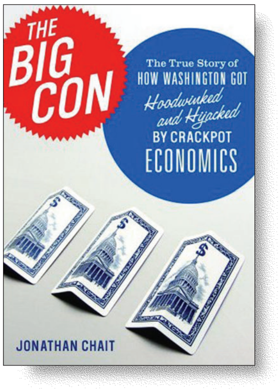
She knew how to cope. After all, her pioneering forebears, even after great hardships, had remained full of grit and determination and the belief "that over the next river or the next mountain range, they would find a better life . . . and even if they didn't they were sure their children would." Her parents, no matter the difficulties or disappointments in their own lives, gave her "unconditional love" and unfailing interest and support. "It was a powerful mix," she says, "particularly with the reinforcement that a small town can offer."

Mrs. Cheney also writes that, during a time when boys presumably had more opportunities, "it never occurred to me that my chances . . . were diminished because I was a girl." She read *Wonder Woman* comics, won spelling bees, and had role models of strong women like her diminutive hard-working grandmother—a seamstress who always wore housedresses even while hunting antelope. There were also her female teachers in both grade and high school who demanded the best from her and her classmates. And there was her own desire to achieve, whether by getting all A's—her father told her anything less was unacceptable—or by being Wyoming's baton-twirling champion, or by winning the American Legion's Outstanding Girl of the Year Award. She achieved all her goals, encouraged by her mother, who served as her personal public-relations agent, made her baton-twirling costumes, and paid for private twirling lessons out of her police-department salary. She also had her daughter's achievements reported on so regularly by the *Casper Morning Sun* that, by the time she was in high school and on her way to becoming Homecoming Queen, the paper could refer to her only by her first name.

What may create the greatest interest in this memoir is the story of her *High School Musical*–like romance with the future vice president. Dick Cheney was definitely the BMOC at Natrona County High: class president and co-captain of the football team. They dated their junior and senior years, and she wrote in his yearbook, "Dick, you are the neatest boy I've ever known." But, hey, there was some drama too. At one point he decided, just before graduation, that they should "play the field." Needless to say, this suggestion was not responded to positively. Besides throwing his gold football she had been wearing around her neck at him, the future Mrs. Cheney went home and huddled with her mother. Together, they called in reinforcements, her aunt and grandmother, who arrived bearing an array of attractive dresses. Her grandmother tailored a seductive black lace sheath for her to wear to the next dance to which she went with someone else. By the middle of the evening, Dick was asking her to dance, and then to take her home. His "playing the field" had lasted eleven days.

What is most important about this book is its recognition of the extraordinary confidence that she, Dick Cheney, their classmates, and so many Americans at the time felt about their lives, their futures, and their country. "To an unusual degree, I think, we grew up with the sense that you could do and be whatever you wanted." Although she gives part of the credit for this positive attitude to their being Westerners under that big blue sky, it was actually prevalent throughout much of America: I myself grew up at around the same time in a far different place, a Long Island suburb. And yet much of my childhood—from the *Wonder Woman* comics I read, to a father who expected all A's, to a feeling that if I worked hard I could achieve whatever I wanted—was very much the same. Mrs. Cheney says she knows her grandchildren cannot live as she once did, but her touching memoir makes one wish that they and other young Americans might possess what she evokes so well as she tells her own and her family's story: the resiliency to deal with challenges, the determination to do one's best, and an optimism about their future and America's future. **NR**

So Great a Conspiracy?



The Big Con:
The True Story of How Washington Got Hoodwinked and Hijacked by Crackpot Economics,
by Jonathan Chait (Houghton Mifflin, 304 pp., $25)

KEVIN A. HASSETT

In the introduction to this book, *New Republic* senior editor Jonathan Chait writes: "I have this problem. Whenever I try to explain what's happening in American politics—I mean, what's *really* happening—I wind up sounding a bit like an unhinged conspiracy theorist. But honestly, I'm not."

With this breathy confession, Chait offers himself up to the reader as a modern-day equivalent of Abbé Faria, the incarcerated Italian priest from Dumas's classic *The Count of Monte Cristo* who was said to be mad, but was in fact a brilliant scholar with an encyclopedic knowledge of many of the world's most precious secrets.

Chait's precious secret—which he exposes in this, his first book—is that "American politics has been hijacked by a tiny coterie of right-wing economic extremists, some of them ideological zealots, others merely greedy, a few of them possibly insane. . . . The scope of their triumph is breathtaking."

The culprits, Chait argues, are the supply-siders, who peddle the crackpot idea that tax cuts pay for themselves, and ruthlessly enforce party doctrine. This "coterie" has tilted American policy with cruel efficiency toward themselves (the rich), and obliterated collegiality in government through their blatant intellectual dishonesty.

Increasing inequality in the U.S. is, according to Chait, the most serious outcome of the efforts of these sinister gentlemen, and, ominously, Chait compares the current episode to the America of a century ago—when, he writes, "what finally turned the tide was a wave of labor violence and radical activism." Chait appears to be warning Republicans that they should give up their devotion to low marginal tax rates, or blood is going to be spilled.

There certainly is ample room in the public sphere for a careful and unbiased review of the economic literature addressing the efficacy of tax cuts. Unfortunately, Chait provides no such product, instead relying predominantly on character assassination and guilt by association. He lines up the famous supply-siders—Arthur Laffer, George Gilder, Jude Wanniski, and Steve Moore, to name a few—and attacks them one by one. Gilder, for example, appears to have believed he had ESP. Wanniski cavorted with Farrakhan, and defended Saddam Hussein. In the oddest moment in the book—but one that shows the author's willingness to favor a low blow over genuine analysis—Chait says that Moore's writings look suspiciously like spam e-mails pushing fake Viagra.

There are two problems with Chait's approach. The first is a logical one: Even if one assumes that a theory has been put forward by an unbalanced person, that fact does not mean that the theory is incorrect. Princeton economist John Nash, for example, invented economic theories worthy of a Nobel Prize, despite his battle with mental-health problems. It might be amusing that Gilder thought he had ESP, but it is irrelevant.

But a second problem—and one that's much more significant, given Chait's heavy focus on the personalities involved—is that the thumbnail sketches provided by Chait of the key actors are often unfair, and at times incorrect.

For example, Chait spends a number of pages attacking Grover Norquist. Citing

Mr. Hassett is director of economic-policy studies and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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Nina J. Easton's book *Gang of Five*, he writes that Norquist "kept a pet boa constrictor and fed it a series of mice named after the former Democratic whip David Bonior." This story is, however, an urban myth that appeared to originate in a November 6, 1996, *Washington Post* article that describes the feeding of a rat to a pet snake at Norquist's office by a young Norquist employee. The *Post* article clearly indicates that Norquist was not present when the poor rat was fed to the 5½-foot boa.

Chait also repeats the canard that Norquist has called the World War II generation "anti-American." As was ably explained in a 2004 *Weekly Standard* article, this unfortunate quote was misattributed to Norquist because an interview with him was translated into Spanish by *El Mundo*, a Spanish newspaper, and then translated back into English by Agence France-Presse. The *Standard* took a look at the original transcript and found that the successive translations had garbled Norquist's words, and that the journalist had paraphrased Norquist and then put the paraphrased sentences in quotes.

Recognition of supply-side effects has spread quickly around the world, not because of the propaganda of crackpots, but because of the data.

All of this leads one to the impression that Chait is not the most reliable conduit of information about the individuals in his book. One suspects that the topic has aroused strong emotions in the author, which have clouded his impartiality.

He is too quick to believe the worst. Chait's targets, to some degree, bear some responsibility for this: After all, many supply-siders mentioned in the book have advocated policies with assertions that are not well supported by economic science. But sound arguments do abound. The economic literature is full of papers that back much of the supply-side agenda. There is, for example, strong empirical evidence, even some published by the Brookings Institution, that countries with lower corporate tax rates have higher revenues than countries with higher rates. Chait dismisses with the back of his hand scholars such as Martin Feldstein of Harvard and Robert Mundell of Columbia who have relied on such work to support Republican policies and who are, shall we say, less "colorful" than some of the supply-side founders.

Recognition of supply-side effects has spread quickly around the world, not because of the propaganda of crackpots, but because of the data, and the work of scholars like Feldstein. Witness the comments, in 2004, of a former prime minister of Iceland, Davíð Oddsson: "In 1995, Treasury debt in Iceland was equivalent to more than 50 percent of GDP. Next year it is forecast to be down to 15 percent of GDP. The Icelandic Treasury is in a solid position and Iceland's international credit rating has never been better. This success has been achieved not in spite of extensive tax cuts but, to a great degree, because of them." Norquist can't be driving policy in Iceland too.

Finally, the claim that supply-siders have triumphed is, unfortunately, ludicrous. If the most radical supply-siders had actually hijacked American politics, the U.S. would have adopted a flat tax, or the "fair tax," or some other major proposal that reduces the marginal income tax rate enormously. If they had accomplished that, one might correctly cite them as a massively powerful force. Instead, we have seen only a number of minor changes, including the original Bush tax cut that left the top marginal rate seven percentage points higher than it had been under Ronald Reagan. It is hard to understand how anyone could claim that such minor policy changes could possibly be the cause of major, continuing turmoil, especially now that the Democrats control Congress.

So, why the book?

Clearly, the problem is that the Democrats, if they sweep to power, will need to increase tax rates dramatically to fund all of their planned projects—and those tax increases would include a hike in taxes on capital income, one that would be diametrically opposed to the lessons of economic science.

While tax rates do not always pay for themselves, higher marginal rates invariably cause economic harm. Slanted books such as this may well discourage

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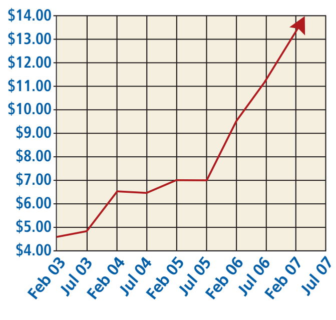

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some of our best academic scribblers from participating in the coming debate, because of fears of the vicious attacks of Chait and his howling friends on the Internet.

Which in some sense is the ultimate irony of the book. Chait bemoans the absence of collegial discourse in Washington, and then proceeds to write a book that is filled with tendentious personal attacks. The book might have been worth reading if it had contained a more thorough analysis of the economics of the Republican agenda.

But in the end, irrelevant personal attacks such as those that fill this book will have little effect on the intellectual debate, which will continue to revolve around respectable economists' differing views of the impact of proposed policies. Indeed, Chait would have done well to pay attention to another Dumas character, Bonapartist Noirtier de Villefort, who told his son: "You know as well as I do, my dear boy, that in politics there are no people, only ideas." **NR**

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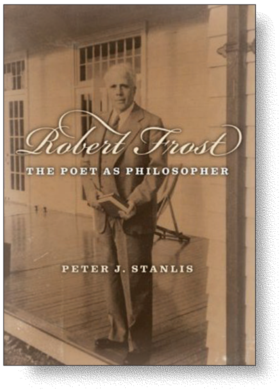

Robert Frost:
The Poet as Philosopher,
by Peter J. Stanlis
(ISI, 452 pp., $28)

JAMES E. PERSON JR.

Robert Frost remains one of the best-loved poets of the American people—and for a time that was his curse. An outspoken foe of much that passes for stylishly up-to-date in American poetry, he was despised by some within the critical establishment of his day, who grudgingly acknowledged the poet's work as memorable, textured, and superbly crafted, but tended to mentally file it under the heading "Suitable for Middle School Readers and Sentimental Seniors."

During his life Frost was widely perceived as the last representative of a time when New England was the literary center of the United States; his writing harkened back to an era of hardscrabble agrarianism and self-reliance. Russell Kirk wrote, "I fancy that what attracts millions of Americans to his work is the quality of American character which glows through his verses. Frost's affinity with the old America, and with views of humanity and art older still, strikes chords of sympathy in those millions of Americans who still believe that life is worth living and America worth defending. From tradition he draws his strength."

Then, beginning in 1966, came the three-volume authorized biography by Lawrance Thompson—which revealed "proof" that Frost was a man of irredeemable pettiness, dishonesty, selfishness, and outright cruelty. Here was the *real* Robert Frost, critics burbled. Many of them failed to notice that Thompson's comprehension of Frost's ideas and poetry—colored by the biographer's Procrustean filtering of Frost through his own understanding of psychologist Karen Horney's theories of neurosis—was off-kilter and tin-eared. There was also strong evidence to suggest that Thompson had grown to despise Frost during their years of difficult friendship, and that this hatred had found its way into his biography. But never mind these quibbles: Frost, the beloved farmer-poet, had been exposed as a monster, and that made all the difference.

Toward the end of his life, fearing the worst about how Thompson would present his life, Frost had told his final editor, Stanley Burnshaw, "I'm counting on you to protect me from Larry. Remember!" Burnshaw's own study, *Robert Frost Himself* (1986), represented a major step toward weakening the Frost-as-monster myth. In a review of this work published in National Review, Thomas P. McDonnell commended Burnshaw's effort and noted that Frost "would have been much better off if he had named as his official biographer someone given to a morally deeper understanding of the weaknesses and strains put upon our human nature." Indeed; and Frost may actually have been better off if he had named Peter J. Stanlis, a distinguished literary scholar and longtime friend of the poet, as his biographer.

Stanlis, who knew and spoke with Frost on and off between 1939 and the poet's death—and who published a tight, informative study, "Robert Frost: The Individual and Society," in 1973—is best known as the formidable scholar of 18th-century literature whose *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (1958) revolutionized our understanding of Burke. Now, in *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, he has performed a similar task, producing a book that may well reshape our understanding of Frost.

Perhaps one key reason for some critics' desire to believe the worst about Frost lies in a fact ably demonstrated by Stanlis: that

Mr. Person is the author of *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* and *Earl Hamner: From Walton's Mountain to Tomorrow.*

Frost was essentially a conservative thinker and craftsman. In a 2003 interview, Stanlis told me that, when he published his book on Burke, he sent an inscribed copy to Frost—and the next time the two men met Frost made it quite clear that he "had a favorable, deep-down appreciation of Edmund Burke, not only in his politics but as a human being." While Frost eschewed labels, and famously declared that he "never dared to be radical when young / For fear it would make me conservative when old," he told Stanlis "that he thoroughly agreed with much of Burke, particularly Burke's view of the French Revolution" and "held a conception of prejudice which is absolutely identical with what Burke defends as prejudice: a prejudgment of things that accrue as a result of past experience which become lodged in the mind and become the basis for knowledge of how we respond to future experiences themselves. . . . So I think that there's a great deal of spiritual affinity between Frost and Burke."

Beyond this, and central to *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, is Stanlis's argument that Frost was "one of the most philosophical and least ideological American poets of the 20th century." Frost had little sympathy with the various single-minded "-ologies" and "-isms" that dotted the past century, each of which claimed that life can be reduced to a single guiding force or principle—be it economics, race, the mind, brute force, sexuality, or material chance. In contrast to these monistic beliefs—through a close reading of Frost's poetry, letters, and essays—Stanlis argues convincingly that Frost was a dualist: one who believes that "reality consists of two distinct, absolute, and all-inclusive elements, most commonly identified as matter and mind, or as Frost preferred, matter and spirit," which "exist together in a complex perpetual relationship in the universe and the existential world of mankind."

This dualist philosophy made Frost keenly aware of what he termed the "two-endedness of things" and what Stanlis calls "the difficulty or impossibility of resolving complex religious, moral, intellectual, and social problems through well-intentioned but simple monistic assumptions, methods, or conclusions." Far from viewing the state of humanity as a puzzle to be solved—how best to liberate mankind from one constraint or another in order to enter a brave new world—Frost's thought took into account the unique, dual nature of man, "with his strange and wicked and yet half-heroic heart," in the words of Chesterton's Father Brown. Frost's poetry is filled with what the poet termed "endless . . . things in pairs ordained to everlasting opposition"; the pairings included justice–mercy, body–soul, rights–duties, reality–illusion, and bond–free. This dualism enabled Frost to capture the wonder, sorrow, and complexity of life in his poetry; it is glimpsed in the contrast between earth and sky in "Birches," between conflicting but equally destructive forces in "Fire and Ice," and between supposition and knowledge in "The Secret Sits," to name but three examples.

Stanlis warns that it would be a serious error for any critic to assume that Frost's philosophical dualism can be reconstructed or understood entirely through a study of his poetry. To Frost, the unity created by form in a poem does not result in a final or permanent unity in content or theme. As Stanlis notes:

> This is an important distinction that many literary critics of Frost have failed to understand and that has led them to assume or make unreasonable demands that he would provide a final solution to the metaphysical mysteries of man's life on earth or even to the perennial social and economic problems that afflict society. . . . Frost believed that the great mys-

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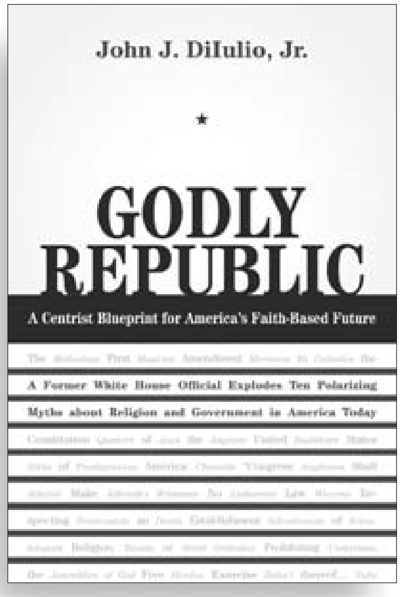
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> teries of life have no permanent or final answer in the temporal life of man, that something must always be left to God. He also believed that the perennial problems of man in society could at best be ameliorated . . . and that no final solutions were possible. His philosophical dualism provides the key to a sound understanding of Frost's total philosophy.

That philosophy can be distilled into two assumptions that lie at the heart of many of Frost's poems: that the earth is the setting for the daunting trial-by-existence common to everyone—consider the tormented husband and wife grieving over their dead-and-buried child in "Home Burial"—and that love can be the best means of resolving common conflicts.

Frost was a strong devotee of natural science. Stanlis is especially helpful in explaining the influences of some crucial 19th-century figures—Charles Darwin, Asa Gray, William James, and Samuel Butler—on Frost's thinking on scientific issues. Frost considered scientists to be heroic figures in the history of civilization, owing to their role in increasing knowledge—but he also possessed a religious temperament, being the son of a Swedenborgian mother and a mystic in his own right. He considered science one of the humanities, believing there to be no final conflict between the claims of science and those of religion. He embraced science, not scientism—the iron faith that science can and will solve all the ills to which human flesh is heir. Frost held that if the claims of Darwinist evolutionary theory and religious faith are both true, then each must be reconcilable with the other; and therefore any appearances of irreconcilability must be temporary, not real.

"A study of Frost's dualism will not only bring more balance into scholarship on his character, thought, and art," claims Stanlis, "but it will open up dimensions of understanding far more profound than any studies of Frost have yet achieved." Amply footnoted, and buttressed by an impressive bibliography of secondary sources, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher* offers much-needed clarity on a man whose life and work have been too long shrouded in confusion. Stanlis has produced a landmark work that will prove essential to future readers who seek to understand Robert Frost. **NR**

■ **FILM** ■

Mystery Train

ROSS DOUTHAT

I HAVE a sneaking suspicion that if you rearranged the order in which Wes Anderson's films have been released—if *The Life Aquatic* had appeared first, followed by *The Royal Tenenbaums* and then *Rushmore*, with his modest debut, *Bottle Rocket*, tossed off as an aside along the way—the critical consensus on the films might be reversed as well. The conventional wisdom holds that *Rushmore* was Anderson's high point, and that he's been repeating himself ever since to diminishing returns—building the same intricate, hermetic worlds over and over again, populating them with the same actors playing the same sort of talented, eccentric, wildly dysfunctional families, and setting the whole thing to the same sort of quirkier-than-thou, rock-geek soundtrack. But precisely because he's been repetitious, it's possible to imagine *The Life Aquatic*, had it appeared out of nowhere, being hailed as a work of originality and genius—or *Rushmore*, had it arrived on the heels of several similar exercises, being dismissed as part of a creative rut.

As it happens, I basically concur with the critical consensus, but I tried to keep this thought experiment in the back of my mind while watching *The Darjeeling Limited*, Anderson's latest variation on his usual themes—on the theory that the fact that a filmmaker seems to do only one sort of thing doesn't mean he can't do it exceptionally well the fourth or seventh time around.

Limited's dysfunctional family consists of three privileged brothers—Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, and Jason Schwartzman—taking a trip across the Subcontinent a year after their father's funeral; its exquisitely detailed, claustrophobic setting is a poshly anachronistic Indian train (done up, like every Anderson set, in the style of a boy's fantasy of grown-up life circa 1961). But there are more significant variations from the usual Anderson template: The director has narrowed his focus considerably after the sprawl of dynastic politics on display in *Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic*, both of which were dominated by bearded patriarchs (Gene Hackman and then Bill Murray) around whom every secondary character revolved. This time, the patriarch is dead, and the matriarch is absent till the final act. Murray puts in another appearance, but it's just a cameo, as a businessman outpaced by a loping Brody in the opening scene and left on the platform as the Limited pulls away. The symbolism thuds a bit, but works: This is a typical Anderson family, but one that's left its dad behind.

Or that's trying to do so, at least. The backstory trickles out at intervals, and the audience is left to fill in the conspicuous blanks—but the basic facts are clear enough. Wilson's Francis has the mother issues, and his control-freak act (he's brought a lackey from his company along to micromanage their itinerary) is an unconscious imitation of their absent matriarch, who vanished the day of their father's funeral and hasn't been seen since. (Wilson's face is heavily bandaged throughout, the result of an accident that may have been a suicide attempt: a plot twist shadowed by Wilson's own attempted suicide in August.) Brody's Peter has the daddy complex: He's in flight from a seven-months-pregnant wife, evading fatherhood even as he clutches various talismans (a razor, a pair of sunglasses) that his father left behind. And Schwartzman's Jack has the woman issues: He's theoretically fleeing an unfaithful lover (Natalie Portman), while stopping at every station to dial his way into her voice mail and check for messages from rivals.

This is the what; what's missing is the how, the pages and footnotes from the family history that explain how the brothers got this way. But after the frantic detail of Anderson's last two films, this absence is a blessing. By taking a glancing look at his principals, he has room to open the film out a bit, to give us more of India by (eventually) leaving the cramped, Raj-lite confines of the train behind. His earlier movies dealt with encounters within families; this one, at least in part, deals with a family's encounter with the wider world—from the sun-baked farming village where the brothers stumble into a domestic tragedy that makes their own look relatively small, to the wild Nepalese mountains where their pilgrimage ends. And like India itself, *The Darjeeling Limited* is washed in religion, in temples and guttering candles and chanting Hindu priests, in funeral rites and gilded statues and the stark shape of a cross rising from a mountaintop, guarding a monastery where local children learn to sing the Mass.

All these religious gestures don't come to any specific point, of course; like too many modern narratives of spiritual questing, *The Darjeeling Limited* is a prisoner of its own ecumenism. But they serve a purpose even so, making this the first time an Anderson film has offered intimations of a world that's bigger than the meticulous dollhouses his characters build around themselves—from Rushmore Academy to the Tenenbaum brownstone to Steve Zissou's cluttered submarine in *The Life Aquatic*. Anderson's grown-ups tend to spend their lives pursuing a perfected vision of childhood: "That was my favorite age," Zissou says of being eleven-and-a-half, and his entire life is a monument to that pre-adolescent, boy's-adventure ideal. Whereas *The Darjeeling Limited*, for all its faults, is the first Anderson film that pushes its characters toward the realization that there might be life after twelve. **NR**

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Darjeeling*'s Adrien Brody, Owen Wilson, and Jason Schwartzman*

FOX SEARCHLIGHT

■ CITY DESK ■

Books, Books, Books

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE paper tells me that NBC will be offering its programs on demand via Amazon, after a deal with Apple fell through. This is the inevitable, even too-late, step after TiVo. The TV series, the weekly ritual of my black-and-white youth, recurring like little seasons, has broken up into on-demand bits. So television joins the stream of Internet content, into which no man steps twice.

But the first interactive on-demand information system, before computers, before even electricity, was rolled out in Scribes 3.0—the page. Scribes 1.0 was cuneiform written on tablets; Scribes 2.0 was the scroll. But, while tablets could be shuffled, they were essentially rocks, and while scrolls were made of parchment, they could not be shuffled, only unrolled. With the hand-lettered page, both lightweight and flappable, we entered a new universe. Ucbald in his monastery could skip to the end of an Apocalypse, to find out if God saved the day at last; or he could read it backwards; or he could read the same page 20 times (necessary perhaps if he was newly literate). Gutenberg 1.0 mechanized the process. Gnomes in a hundred laboratories have been trying to invent the e-book that will be as useful and pleasant as the printed page, but they haven't done it yet.

What the e-book, even in its ugly infancy, has already done, however, is solve the storage problem of its incarnate predecessor. I am acutely aware of this problem because my office has just moved—forcing me to move my books.

This is a problem that afflicts the city today. One scene in *The Age of Innocence* showed Newland Archer in his library opening a crate of newly ordered books. Not in 21st-century Manhattan, Oldland. The "library" of my apartment consists of three shelves at ceiling level (in a hallway, over a bathroom door, and over a window); wooden boards supported by brackets flanking another window; and a piece of furniture from a Greek place on Sixth Avenue beside the dining-room table (which, of course, is in the dining "angle," not the dining "room"). *The Age of Innocence* sits on the last-named piece (between the *German Ideology* and a book of essays edited by David Brooks). Given my addiction to reading and my resistance to parting, these spaces were soon filled; my equivalent of the Gilded Age library had to be my office. One day I went to K-Mart, bought a U-Build-It bookshelf, and shlepped the timber to Murray Hill; the cabbie kindly let the ends stick out of his rolled-down windows like fetal wings. The books on those shelves were the hoard that had to be moved.

Now that I had to box and unbox, I also had to think, and choose. What did I save, and what did I winnow?

Inattention is a great saving force; what we ignore we live with. But upheaval can be liberating. George Orwell said he was glad the Library of Alexandria burned: less work for him at Eton. Now that I had to box and unbox, I also had to think, and choose. These were books, remember, that, while I had not wanted to get rid of them, I did not feel I needed at home. They were in an intermediate state—not purgatory, exactly, for all the souls in purgatory are saved. What did I save, and what did I winnow?

I saved parts of me. My college yearbooks preserve pictures of me wearing the medal of the Chairman of the Party of the Right, and wearing the white tie of my singing group. I could do without the pictures of me wearing the mustache I had in the Burt Reynolds years, but the past, unlike the page, cannot be manipulated. I saved books that are tools. I own the *Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr*, edited by Mary-Jo Kline. One reason I own it is that it is so short (two volumes). "One combs it in vain," wrote Burr's biographer Milton Lomask, "for so much as a single sentence that can be cited as pointing to a political philosophy." I saved books that represent old loyalties. I went through a John Updike phase in the early Reagan years, and my collection of his works is almost as complete as my collection of Burr's. The brands not plucked out of the burning include betrayed loyalties: My Updike collection is now smaller by *The Centaur*, and several books of reviews. I disposed of obsolete tools. I let go a book on modern Mexican-American immigrants. The issue has grown much hotter in the 15 years since the book was published, which paradoxically makes it old hat: So much more happens every day. I have simultaneously become more interested in the Mexican War—not, I hope, an antiquary's dodge, but following the story upriver. The toughest cases were autographed copies. Eminent acquaintance gave me a coffee-table book; I never imagined I would read it, and he is now dead. Farewell. Former friend gave me an academic book. I never read it either, and the friendship is dead. But he was at my wedding. Stay a while.

I understand there are cities where the space crunch is even worse than Manhattan. One of the many characters in David Lodge's *Small World* (a home book, not an office one; it sits on a stack atop *Witness* and the *Encyclopedia of Turtles*) is a Japanese translator of modern English fiction. He jokes about the titles the Japanese used to attach to Shakespeare plays (*The Strange Affair of the Flesh and the Bosom* was *The Merchant of Venice*). He lives in Tokyo in a cubicle in which he is unable to stand upright.

The keepers have come out of their boxes, and sit on the carpet, awaiting new shelves. Some publisher meanwhile has sent me a sleek fat history of Protestantism. Will it stay? How long? I find discarded, discolored paperbacks in the mail room, on the street: *The Words* (Jean-Paul Sartre); *The Compassionate Buddha* (Buddha). The urban/literary cycle—part commuting, part food distribution, part waste removal—begins again. **NR**

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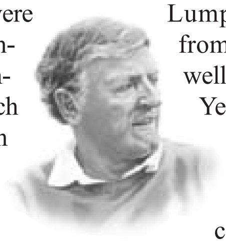
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

World War IV?

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 4

SOME set the matter aside as being nothing more than verbal play for the benefit of word-men. What term properly designates what we are doing, and what we are enduring, in many parts of the world, the symbolic center of which is the Twin Towers site in Manhattan? Sometimes the words chosen can mean the justification of an additional measure of military power. Always they calibrate the public mood and the public perception of what is going on.

I am informed that French pacifists, ensconced in the French Academy in 1939 and determined to understate Nazi military exercises, refused to acknowledge such a creature as a "bombardier." Right, "bombardier" would have meant "bomber pilot." The pacifists were prepared to use the word bombardier, but only as the flying instrument—an airplane from which one drops bombs. Since no such creature as a pilot who drops bombs from such an airplane was acknowledged to exist, the schoolmen of the academy at first refused to authorize that use of the word.



Norman Podhoretz, a gifted writer and analyst, does not cavil in these matters, and his new book is called *World War IV*. By Podhoretz's calculations, World War II ended with the surrender of Berlin and Tokyo. This was followed by another and very serious war, which we termed the Cold War. That pretty well ended when the Soviet Union allowed the gates in Berlin to open and, two years later, abandoned the Soviet flag. But the end of World War III did not augur an end to global warfare. The new enemy is referred to in certain quarters as Islamofascism. And Podhoretz is the chief taxonomist of that awful combine.

He quotes Daniel Pipes of the Middle East Forum. Pipes is off to a rollicking start in what becomes the deadliest paragraph in town. Begin with our military superiority, which would appear to make victory inevitable. "Islamists have nothing like the military machine the Axis deployed in World War II, nor the Soviet Union during the Cold War. What do the Islamists have to compare with the Wehrmacht or the Red Army? The SS or Spetznaz? The Gestapo or the KGB?"

A thoughtful answer to that question is sobering. The Islamists have:

"A potential access to weapons of mass destruction that could devastate Western life.

"A religious appeal that provides deeper resonance and greater staying power than the artificial ideologies of fascism or Communism.

"An impressively conceptualized, funded, and organized institutional machinery that successfully builds credibility, goodwill and electoral success.

"An ideology capable of appealing to Muslims of every size and shape, from Lumpenproletariat to privileged, from illiterates to Ph.D.s, from the well-adjusted to psychopaths, from Yemenis to Canadians."

Add to the above "a huge number of committed cadres. If Islamists constitute 10 percent to 15 percent of the Muslim population worldwide, they number some 125 million to 200 million persons, or a far greater total than all the fascists and Communists, combined, who ever lived."

Recognition, then, of the scale of the pretensions of the Islamist enemy has to precede substantial measures against it. In the matter of Iraq, for instance, the ambiguity of our engagement and the enlarging political cry against it would alter dramatically if one accepted the premises of the Fourth World War so ineluctably spelled out in Podhoretz's little volume.

Those critics who insist that it is only a small war-party faction of the Islamists that we have to fear might have been asked a generation ago if it was not merely a small number of Germans and Russians we were properly exercised about. Sixty million people were dead after that misreckoning.

Speak Up in English

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 14

IN the past period, at times when the guns of Iraq were not obliterating all other political sounds, you could make out, here and there, pleas for "language unification."

That's one of the alluring titles given ("Escape from Babel" is my favorite) to the political effort to make English the only language officially used in the United States. For example, to cut out road signs in the Spanish language. These signs don't seriously inconvenience anybody; there is always an English version within sight. But there are Americans who resist the sensation that they are traveling toward a foreign country, when the road map says you have 75 more miles of Arizona before you'll actually hit Mexico.

The language-reform movement is not new. It was more than a hundred years ago that an effort was actually made to devise a language, so to speak from A to Z, to which all nations would draw, resulting, after a few decades of experimentation, in universal communication. This language, Esperanto, had its own grammar and its own vocabulary, based on European root words.

There were several conspicuous weaknesses in the Esperanto movement, but you didn't need more than one to torpedo the idea. That weakness was enunciated in his characteristic short form by Will Rogers. When he said no more about the proposed reform than, "They ain't gonna do it," he wasn't being snotty, in the style of Gore Vidal. He was saying that to converse in a foreign tongue required more effort than most people would volunteer, and of course he was right.

A more modest movement—to sacramentalize 850 English words, a familiarity with which was to be required for anyone seeking a passport or a driving license—was meaty enough to attract the sponsorship of Winston Churchill. But Basic English, as this movement was called, was put on the shelf when Churchill was voted out of office.

What it has got down to in our country, pretty well, is the reverse of Basic English: Any American running for president today is expected to be familiar with 850 Spanish words. But the average motorist cannot be counted on to learn what he has to learn about road hazards described only in a language other than his own. And so other ventures in the idea of universal communication have been attempted, the most successful being pictorializations. You don't need to be a philologist to slow down when the picture on the sign ahead shows a railroad crossing.

But the language lobby has serious ends in mind. There are two bills currently before Congress, one of them passed by the House, specifying that any official communication by the U.S. government must be written in English. This wouldn't pose a grave hardship, since 99 percent of such communications are already in English. But the one-language constituency wants a great deal more than that. It desires to do away with the use of a foreign language in public as a substitute for English.

The old saw had it that if the use of English were enforced in schools, all children would soon speak in English, even if at home they speak in Spanish, because the pressure to conform would be irresistible. But it turns out that this is not universally the case. There are 6-year-olds in school in California (and elsewhere), who are taught in Spanish, and who then return to homes where Spanish is the language spoken and where entertainment from TV and radio is on Spanish-language channels.

The movements in California and Arizona to require teaching in the English language are wholesome commitments to civil harmony. The searing question, of course, is: Is it too late?

Lunching Free

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 18

In the late 1950s, the formal engagement in state socialism by Great Britain had twice been confirmed by the voters. And the socialists had been twice disfranchised. Great Britain was a mess. Clement Attlee, the clever lawyer-intellectual who embraced the dreams of common ownership, couldn't quite sell the country on the success of it.

And it wasn't the extravagance of the socialist program that reared its ugly head to sound the alarm for the needs of order and moderation. Given the hugeness of the socialist enterprise, the monies Attlee demanded in order to finance his programs were, by current standards, modest. Everything about Attlee was modest—"a modest man who has a good deal to be modest about," Churchill said of him.

Attlee's parsimonious habits cling to the memory. I had a personal taste of them when lecturing at the University of Wisconsin in 1959. The evening before my own appearance—to plead the cause of Barry Goldwater, whose name was being dangled as fit for the presidency—Attlee had spoken. After his lecture, some of the kids drove him to the airport. On presenting his ticket to New York, he was told by the steward that he would need to supplement the ticket fare by $55.

Why? Attlee asked.

Because that was the price of a first-class ticket. And the flight on which he was ticketed was first-class only.

To the alarm of his student hosts, Attlee demanded to know at what time there was a flight that had tourist-class seats. Answer: 3 o'clock in the morning. Attlee asked that he be awakened in time for that flight, intending to doze in the waiting room. No expostulation would change his course. There was a wan smile, and Clement Attlee, father of British socialism, went with his overnight case to the waiting room and bade his hosts goodnight. I told the kids that if Goldwater had been there he'd have come up with the $55 from his own pocket.

The socialist government was widely considered to be the disaster that Churchill, running in 1951 to replace Attlee as prime minister, insisted it was. But the British socialists made one contribution to modern democratic practices that stuck: free medicine.

It was uproariously popular. I raised the point with Senator Goldwater, and he told of his vehement opposition to the program, a version of it having been introduced in a Senate bill by Estes Kefauver and Hubert Humphrey. Goldwater summoned his deepest reserves of gravity and said to me that, if enacted, the bill would end up costing $5 billion.

I thought the sum indefensibly exaggerated, but this morning's *New York Times* examines the health-reform measures being advocated by the leading Democratic contenders for president. One section is devoted to cost. The estimated annual cost of Sen. Hillary Clinton's plan is $110 billion. Of Sen. Barack Obama's, "$50 to $65 billion." Of John Edwards's, "$90 to $120 billion."

Applying the inflation factor ($1 in 1960 had become $16 by 2005), we can fiddle with the economic details but still quickly realize that "free" medicine exceeds the cost of such programs as estimated 50 years ago.

The best analytical breakdown of the public question is this:

1) The British established, with their ringingly popular National Health system, that politically it is unbeatable. No matter what was done with nationalized steel or other industries, you had to hang onto free medicine.

2) The politicians on this side of the Atlantic acknowledge that free health care, or its equivalent, is an economic luxury that is demanding a primary lodging in the political programs of the major parties. So is it an economic luxury? Yes. And the country can afford an economic luxury, the analysts will tell you.

It will be very hard to allocate the cost. Except that it will be assigned to—the rich. That is an indispensable feature of any redistributionist scheme: figure out a way to conceal the cost and place the burden, to the extent it cannot be hidden, on others than those who are benefiting from the program. It is not surprising that all the candidates surveyed in the *Times* story recommended that the burden of the cost should be assigned to those taxpayers who earn more than $250,000—yes, the people who benefited from the tax-reduction packages of President Bush.

The adage of Milton Friedman that there is no such thing as a free lunch is undamaged by the circumlocutions of the politicians. Is the challenge to the Republicans simply a matter of parsing the subtle march, by the opposition, toward collectivist policies?

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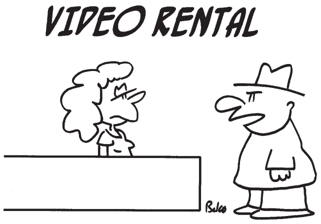

"You recommended Dumb and Dumber *the last time I was here!"*

happy warrior

MARK STEYN

The Bourne Template

I'm always impressed by the indestructibility of clichés. For example, I love that moment in the first *Naked Gun* picture when Leslie Nielsen and Priscilla Presley are together in front of a roaring fire, and Miss Presley stands up, reaches behind, and her dress, as they do in the movies, falls from her shoulders in one perfect shimmering drop. And then the great Nielsen stands up and reaches behind, and in an equally perfect instant his suit, shirt, and tie all drop from his shoulders. I can't believe any director of a celluloid sex scene could do the frock drop for real after that, yet they do, all the time, in a thousand and one cheesy dramas.

Equally indestructible is the movies' idea of the CIA. For years I've joked about those films in which some guy would be on the lam from the spooks, and he'd drive and drive and drive, switching vehicles, covering his tracks, but finally at some dusty one-stoplight town in the middle of Kansas he has no choice but to pull over and risk using the only payphone in the county—and, as soon as he does, somewhere in Langley a light comes on and a computer starts to whirr, and next thing you know the phone booth goes ka-boom, much to the shock of the old guy nursing his cup o' joe in the diner across the street.

Yet no matter how much you scoff at the clichés, Hollywood keeps peddling them. The recent Matt Damon movie *The Bourne Ultimatum* has a moment in which a reporter at the *Guardian* uses a certain word to his editor. The CIA, it turns out, are monitoring every cellphone in the world, just in case this one word comes up. It's the name of the top-secret terrorist-rendition and torturing program they don't want anyone to find out about. So, in an instant, they've got a tail on the *Guardian* man in London. He hails a cab and leans in to tell the driver where he wants to go, unaware that he's telling the CIA also, because they've got a super-sensitive listening device. They dispatch an asset to liquidate the *Guardian* problem once and for all. And not just some lone assassin. There's a whole team swarming a London bus in rush hour. In the seconds before they close in for the kill, more agents appear, to disable the closed-circuit security cameras at the railway station as the assassin squeezes the trigger.

And this entire operation was put together in a foreign capital within minutes.

Where is that CIA when you need them? In reality, the Agency would be more likely to deal with the hapless hack by putting it about that Scooter Libby leaked something to him and tying him up in a Patrick Fitzgerald investigation for two years. As for the speed with which they swing into action, this is an agency whose head honcho testified three years after 9/11 that it would take another five years to rebuild the clandestine service. Imagine Wild Bill Donovan telling FDR that the OSS was an excellent idea and he'd be sure to have it up and running in time for the Korean War, or maybe the Cuban missile crisis.

Matt Damon, perpetuating the cliché

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

But not in the movies. In Hollywood, *The Bourne Ultimatum* is the template: Every plot has a government agency or well-connected corporation behind it. And anyone who doubts the influence of the medium should consider that a substantial proportion of the population now watches the news like a movie. The World Trade Center got taken out? Interesting. Who did it? Mohamed Atta and a gang of Saudi males? Yeah, yeah. But what's the plot twist? Who *really* did it? Someone in the government, right? The planes were switched in mid-flight and the passengers were "disposed of in the Atlantic Ocean" (Prof. A. K. Dewdney of the University of Western Ontario), and voice-modification technology was used to fake the phone calls to loved ones, and Flight 93 was "taken out by the North Dakota air guard" (retired colonel Donn de Grand Pre), and anyway everyone knows fire can't melt steel (Rosie O'Donnell), so Bush must have done it, and, if you don't believe me, ask yourself why World Trade Center Tower 7 had to be destroyed.

And, if you point out that having a bunch of planes hijacked and replaced by Predator drones and the crew and passengers dumped over the Atlantic would seem to be a big enough conspiracy that somebody would have leaked something by now, if only to get a book deal, well, that just shows how cunning it is. Or that you're in on it. There have always been conspiracies, of course, but today there's only one, with the same relentless message: The bad guy is us, our government agents, our cabinet officials, our corporations. America is one unending director's cut of *The Usual Suspects*, with Karl Rove as Keyser Soze. And yes, yes, I know Rove is supposed to have "left" the White House, but doesn't that strike you as a bit convenient?

This sensibility is something worse than mere liberal bias. It corrodes reality itself. To the old question "Who ya gonna believe, me or your lyin' eyes?" a nation answers, "You're right: My eyes must be lying." For there is nothing so naïve as a reflexive cynic. So back we troop to that weary Bourne from which, apparently, we can never return. I saw a trailer for yet another movie the other day. Tom Cruise sneering, "Do you want to win the War on Terror?" New film, same plot. **NR**

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